MOHAMMED

AND THE END OF THE WORLD

CRITICAL STUDY OF PRIMITIVE ISLAM

by

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WARNING

The thesis that I support is, I believe, entirely new. It stirs up, in passing, a number of small problems and objections that I cannot pass in silence, lest these enfeeble the whole work. On the other hand, to resolve them in the main text… such would derail the logical connection of my discussion and would vex the argumentation; such would render it unreadable for non-specialists, obscure and confusing for competent critics. I thought that in order to avoid both pitfalls, I should separate those elements which cannot be reconciled. So I present, first, in clear form, sequentially and as logical as possible, the main argument of this book. After that I resume in my text, page by page, all that can lead to a discussion, to a development, to a clarification of detail. In this way, all those who, without being versed in the Arabic language, are interested in Islam, can read and judge the first part; all those who have the right to demand of me the rigorous explanations of careful scholarship can then analyze, constrain, or criticize the smallest details. For my part, I find it permissible to expand, without fearing reproach about length or digression, upon all questions connected, from near and far, about my topic, and to treat them in the way of articles or isolated memoirs that continue to the limits of my knowledge. Thus, it is true, will be made more apparent my mistakes and my shortcomings; but I will have only gratitude for those who will report them to me. May they judge me with some indulgence!

In the first part, I cite only European texts and keep the notes to a strict minimum; the transcripts of Arabic words there are of a common form. I reserve for the second part the

quotations and discussions of the Oriental texts, a strict transcription, the general index, to which I will give all my care, in a word all the critical apparatus rightly demanded by modern erudition.

Paris, 30 May, 1911.

It is a revelation of the hour.
(Qur'ân XLIII, 61.)

He (Mohammed) was sent with the hour to warn you before a terrible punishment.
(Ibn Sad, I, 1, p. 65, l. 26.)

I

One generally assumes of the text of the Qur'ân, such as it has come down to us, that it is authentic[1] and that it reproduces exactly the thought of Muhammad, faithfully gathered by his secretaries as the revelations gradually appeared. One learns that some of his secretaries were highly controversial at the time; that the immediate successor of the Prophet made a strict recension, such that, a few years later, the arrangement of the text was altered. One finds evident examples of verses canceled; and the so-bizarre way in which the text is presented to us (in order of the size of the chapters or surahs) shows well the artificial character of the Qur'ân that we possess. Despite that, the assurance with which Muslims – who do not refrain from accusing Jews and Christians of having altered their Scriptures – present this incoherent collection as

[1] "The authenticity of the Qur'ân has never been questioned, and science has only confirmed and sanctioned the tradition that names Muhammad as the author of the book in all its chapters and verses." HARTWIG DEBENBOURG, *Opuscules d'un Arabisant*, Paris, 1905, pp. 17-18 (*La composition du Qoran*, reprint from an opening lecture at the Sorbonne in 1869). Cf. HOUTSMA, in CHANTEPIE DE LA SAUSSAYE, *Manuel de histoire des religions* (translation Hubert and Is. Lévy, 1904), pp. 273-274, clearly inspired by NÖLDEKE, *Geschichte des Qorans*, 1st ed., P. 189 ff. [The second part. Casanova was aware of Schwally's second *edition* of the *Geschichte*, but our author will not use it until the conclusion of this oeuvre. That second edition is what Wolfgang Behn has translated to English (Brill, 2013), where the relevant part is pp. 213f.]

[The first paragraph and half are Ibn Warraq's, from "Skepticism And Koranic Research" (Dec 2007), with a few corrections for style.]

rigorously authentic in all its parts has imposed itself upon the orientalists, and the thesis that I wish to uphold will seem very paradoxal and forced[2].

I maintain, however, that the real doctrine of Muhammad was, if not falsified, at least concealed with the greatest of care. I shall set out soon the extremely simple reasons which led first Abu Bakr, then Uthman, to alter thoroughly the sacred text, and this rearrangement was done with such skill that, thenceforth, it seemed impossible to reconstitute the Ur-Qur'ân or the original Qur'ân. If however my thesis was accepted, it could serve as a point of departure for this reconstitution, at least for everything that concerns the original revelations, the only really interesting ones from my point of view, the only ones, moreover, that there was any advantage in reworking, by means of either very light changes of the text, or by deplacements. There is abundant evidence that the first Muslims, despite the undoubtedly powerful memories of the Arabs, were profoundly ignorant of the Qur'ân, and one could, with Muhammad dead, recite them verses of which they had not, at their own admission, the slightest idea[3]. A rearrangement which did not change the *exterior* forms of the verses was thus the easiest. Sprenger, who had had a vague intimation of the thesis that I advocate, accuses Muhammad of having thrown the incoherence into his text himself, in order to get rid of the trace of imprudent words[4]. I say in fact that it is for a reason of this kind that the incoherence was introduced, but not by the author – by his successors. Starting from his viewpoint, Sprenger has naturally found herein a classification of a significant group of verses, and we will see that, if my own viewpoint is true, it must

[2] However, it seems that, over the last few years, there has been a tendency to a neo-criticism of the Koran. See, eg, HARTWIG HIRSCHFELD, *New Researches into the composition and the exegesis of the Qoran*, 1902, chap. XIII. *Interpolations*, p. 136 ff. Cf. GOLDZIHER, *Vorlesungen über den Islam*, 1910, p. 33. [These were going to be delivered in America in English. Translations were made, but the first editions were so bad that Goldziher refused to deliver them. These English versions were published anyway in 1917.]

[3] See below, § II, end.

[4] "Diese... Theorie, setzte ihn in Stand... eine neue Deutung zu geben, und um deutliche Ausspruche undeutlich zu machen, war Transposition und Einschiebung das einfachste Mittel." in *Das Leben und die Lehre des Moḥammad* 2nd ed., p. 533.

necessarily lead to a similar classification[5]. This classification will be one element of the reconstruction of which I have spoken.

Before going into the source of the question, I would like to say first that I reject *a priori* any theory leaning against Muhammad's sincerity. No doubt, one can be led to believe that, in later times, the necessities of politics led him to present his own ideas as divine revelations, so he could better be obeyed. But this should not put into question his sincerity; a modern psychologist could think of auto-suggestion [Louis Massignon, Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane (Paris: 1954), 144 n. 5], and it is contrary to all scientific spirit to assert, without evidence, that here had been imposture and calculation. The whole history of the Arab Prophet proves that his character is positive, serious and loyal. Even when his absolute power is recognized, he knows to hear opinions, to admit his mistakes and to correct them. The distinction between his own views, his conceptions of real life on the one hand, and the assignments from above, on the other hand, is carefully noted by him as by his Companions, and this has continued in Islam, which does not confuse the Qur'ân and the Sunnat and even in the Sunnat, carefully separates that which has an inspired character and that which is only rigorously personal to Mohammed.

As to his alleged hysteria, without venturing to replace one medical hypothesis by another, I think that a very abnormal mind constraint, a regime no less abnormal of fasting and solitude, suffice to explain the anaemia or the nervous dyspepsia (neurasthenia, to use the fashionable term today) which Mohammed seems to have suffered[6].

[5] See § VII.

[6] Many modern Orientalists do not accept even that possibility, for example de Goëje [*die Berufung Mohammed's* in *Orientalische Studien* (TH. NÖLDEKE, *Geburtstag*, 1906), pp. 3-5]. Just recently in the *Journal Asiatique* (Jan-February 1910, 10th series, v. XV, p. 158), Mr. Clément Huart refuses to see in Mohammed a dyspeptic hypochondriac: "I have not, he said, for my part, ever heard of digestive problems with Muhammad".

Dizziness, hallucinations, fainting might not be the symptoms of a constitutional disease. Still less can I accept the theory that such a disease would have determined the outbreak of prophecy in Muhammad, and that this outbreak should be explained by the mental illness of its founder. It is strictly the opposite; if the physiological state of Mohammed was troubled, it is that the intellectual state had pulled him into such a paroxysm that the nervous system has declined. Following a noble metaphor that should be Arabic, *la lame a usé le fourreau* [the blade has worn out the scabbard; "Proverbs, Ancient and Modern", The London Quarterly Review (July, 1888), 125].

So if the Qur'ân carries traces of reworking, if there be irreconcilable contradictions with good faith, it is not Mohammed who be guilty; it is some unscrupulous secretary or authors of posthumous recensions.

It must be admitted that the Prophet was a man of great intelligence. How, poor and orphan[7], doomed from childhood to misery and obscurity, he learnt patiently to earn wealth and respect; the mental maturity and the caution he showed in the appearance of his first revelations, the artifice with which he was able to unite the Arab tribes, despite their ancient divisions, distinguishing what was needed to retain of the old institutions and what to reject, the incomparable magnificence of his language of which no other Arab could have even conceived the idea: all prove that he had a clear view of reality, that dream and imagination were not the characteristics of his genius; but the taste and sense of action, the most precise and the most positive qualities of the militant apostolate. What interest could he have, in those earliest days, to deliver, as real and divine, pure fantasies? Can one suppose that, later, had come to him the ambition of governing Mecca, the Arab race, the whole world, and that to realize this grandiose

[7] This is what the Koran says (93:6-8). We will see, it is true, that in this passage, poverty and abandonment are to be taken in a metaphorical sense, § IV.

plan he had thought to become a religious leader and, thereby, almighty? This cannot be reconciled with his usual taste for solitude, with the indisputable fact that he had previously kept away from politics, and especially with the Arab mentality – mocking and skeptical, quite foreign, at that time at least, to mystical speculations[8]. He was a man too cautious not to find, had he been purely ambitious, a more direct way to acquire an influence which his birth and wealth rendered very legitimate. How would he be stubborn so long to want to impose on the Meccans notions that seemed to them ridiculous and that, far from ensuring him of authority, could only decry and discredit him? It is only very late and in despair of cause that he understood that it was outside of Mecca and against it he had to seek support. His attitude is that of a man inspired, knowing that all, like him, will recognize the divine origin of the words which he heard and which he naively repeats, without wondering for a moment if, by accommodating these words to his contemporaries' mentality, he did not have much greater chance of persuading them. Once in Medina, at the head of an army, he ceases to be only the enthusiast of his debut, and if he had rested there purely and simply, it is clear that his party would have disbanded, and that he would never have seen the triumph of his doctrines. This prophet, like his predecessors of Israel, became chief political and military, and that is when he displays his essential qualities of wielder of men and organizer. To reproach him, in that moment, for having the revelations of a less purely religious and impersonal nature is to show that we do not understand that, the conditions of his life being radically transformed, his thoughts would necessarily evolve in all sincerity and spontaneity. This evolution, he has not seen it, he has not had the least inkling; Mohammed is not a character from a modern romance who studies the fluctuations of his own ego. He sees the goal, he follows it with its political instinct informed and lucid at the same time with this

[8] On this skepticism, see DOZY, *Essai sur l'histoire de l'islamisme*, 9-13.

enlightenment of a sincere Prophet. I repeat, had he only this enlightenment to guide him, he would not have succeeded, he would have failed in his destiny, he would not have been the practical and industrious Arab of which his previous life has informed us[9].

The fullness of spontaneity and sincerity perfectly compatible with the skill and sense of reality alike having been recognized in Mohammed, so it is after his death that ensued the alteration of the Qur'ân. I add: *because of his death*, and this because this death dealt an absolute contradiction to its fundamental doctrine. This doctrine, as I shall try to show, is that the times announced by Daniel and Jesus had arrived: Muhammad was the last Prophet chosen by God to preside conjointly with the Messiah who was to return to earth for this purpose, at the end of the world, at the universal resurrection, and at the final Judgement. On his death, however, this intimate union between the Prophet's coming and the end of the world had to be dissimulated or denied, lest it prove disastrous for the new faith. This pious fraud, then, is shown in the Qur'ân of Abu Bakr and of Othman; it is that which the historian must put in evidence before essaying to reconstitute the original doctrine of Islam.

[9] In this sketch of Mohammed's character, I am pleased to meet with Mr. Houtsma; CHANTEPIE DE LA SAUSSAYE, *Manuel de histoire des religions* (tr. Fr.), pp. 271-272.

II[10]

Suppose, first, that the Qur'ân is authentic in all its parts. We will not find there any political stance, any rule applying to the temporal power. From that follows a first consequence that dominates all Arab history. Two political parties were formed, one that states that the *imam* or sovereign was designated by the Prophet and that assigns formal laws to the imam's succession, the other that declares this matter indifferent to the religion and declares the title for an exclusively secular point, if I may say. The first party has triumphed only in a few rare occasions; instead, in general, it has been the opposition party par excellence. All sorts of malcontents, utopians, revolutionaries, adventurers, and others have rallied to this party more or less sincerely, and it has formed around this principle, as the core, a blur of strange beliefs, metaphysical or mystical, many of them exotic and perfectly foreign to the pure Arab genius. Suffice it to say that these doctrines are considered heretic by the true Arabs and that such followers as managed to establish on it more or less sustainable governments have been Berbers or Persians. Exceptionally, we see such governments founded on the east and south of Araby, regions more accessible to Persian influence. These sectarians, because that is the etymological meaning of the word *Shiites* by which one names them, have, indeed, never disarmed, and the secret of their continuous power and their partial successes is that they give souls an answer to the following question. Why does the Qur'ân which rules, in often very thorough detail, not only

[10] This chapter and the following chapters made up the subject of my lectures at the Collège de France during the month of May 1909.

the beliefs but morals, law, family status, etc., not speak of this element no less essential to the society: political structure? Why, absent from the Qur'ân, divine revelation, would the Prophet neglect to deal with this issue personally and to ensure the transmission of power he held himself, of his prophetic authority and that no one after him could reasonably hold that which he held? If Mohammed was imam, that is to say chief[11] of the Arab community, not as Arab, Koreichite, of a particular family, but as a prophet, it is absolutely necessary that the imam, his successor, be recognized by a quality of like order, that is to say, absent from the prophetism which cannot be renewed, by a designation of prophetic origin.

To this argument Ibn Khaldun responds very clearly, alongside all the orthodox. "The doubt of the Imamiyah in this matter is caused by the fact that they assume the imamate to be one of the pillars of the faith. This is not so. It is one of the general (public) interests. The people are delegated to take care of it. If it were one of the pillars of the faith, it would be something like prayer, and (Muhammad) would have appointed a representative (caliph),[12] exactly as he appointed Abu Bakr to represent him at prayer. (Had he done so,) it would have become generally known, as was the case with the matter of prayer. That the men around Muhammad considered the caliphate as something analogous to prayer and on the strength of that attitude argued in favor of Abu Bakr's caliphate, saying, 'The Messenger of God found him acceptable for our religion. So, why should we not accept him for our worldly affairs?' is merely another proof of the fact that no appointment of an heir had taken place. It also shows that the question of the imamate and succession to it was not as important then as it is today.[13]"

[11] On the meaning of this word, see below, § VI, end.
[12] Meaning in its etymological sense: successor.
[13] *Muqaddimah* translation de Slane, *Prolégomènes* [#3.28] 1.431. [I have swapped this for Franz Rosenthal 2nd ed. (Princeton University Press, 1967).]

I avow that this response is unsatisfactory as possible and that the Shiite doctrine remains intact on the need of an imam of a special character. Well recognizing the silence of Mohammed on the issue of his successors, Ibn Khaldun did not accept here as less admissible the following tradition: "the Imams are taken from the tribe of Quraysh" and that of the same genre in the *Sahih* of Bokhari: "authority will not leave this tribe of Quraysh". These are the two texts cited by the great Arab historian, of which type he notes that several others exist. But the commentary he gives is not without skepticism. He says that while the people of Medina claim the imamate for one of their own, those of Mecca countered them with the Prophet's intentions; and that many scholars have denied the aphorism in question. Then he seeks, nonetheless, to justify the need for the Qurashi origin, not content with the generally accepted explanation that, having given birth to the Prophet, his family enjoys a special blessing. With his ordinary common-sense, he gives here a reason essentially practical, that is to say, as I have said above, exclusively *secular*. This is, he said, that the tribe who enjoyed more authority among the Arabs and who, therefore, had the best chance to retain sovereignty was that one; that any other tribe would have met opposition leading to discord and anarchy[14]. That such considerations demonstrate political wisdom in those who conformed to it, no one can deny; but these do not preclude that fundamental objection which the concerned persons have pronounced, without consulting the others. They were able, in good faith, to give a more rigorous form to the Prophet's mind, more than once stated, that his tribe, that of Koreich, had a marked predominance, which, incidentally, had been established long prior; but the fact that the people of Medina did not at all share the same concept proves that no saying of Muhammad was known at that time, which constrained this positive meaning. As for the reason usually given which Ibn Khaldun himself acknowledges

[14] *Muqaddimah* [#3.24] de Slane tr. 1.397.

insufficient, it is obviously only Shiism attenuated, I would even say Shiism ashamed. If the tribe of Koreich inherits the blessing attached to the Prophet, how would this Prophet's nuclear family, his son Ali and his descendants not be more specifically chosen? Leaving aside any narrow orthodoxy of concern, one may, even being Muslim like the doctors quoted by Ibn Khaldoun, reject these traditions as prejudiced and after the event for reasons of pure politics.

It remains to us who are not Muslims and keep thereby the right to treat Mohammed as an ordinary man of genius, subject to error in the milieu of his highest speculations and of his wisest notions, we have left, I say, to explain why he failed to deal with an issue this crucial. The reason is simple. Mohammed did not think that he would die and leave successors; he believed that the end of the world was near and that he would attend it. This belief in the nearness of the end of the world is properly Christian, and Mohammed called himself the last prophet announced by Jesus Christ, as to complement and complete his doctrine. This belief was shared with the first Muslims as with Muhammad himself, and if the later Muslims could not resign themselves to accept such an error with their Prophet, they have nonetheless preserved his words of which they vainly tried later to divert the sense.

The Qur'ân makes many allusions to the *hour*, that is to say at the end of the world, to the resurrection where will be judged and separated the good and the bad, but it assigns to it no date: "If one ask thee about the Hour", said God to His Prophet; "answer that it is the secret of my Lord" that will happen "suddenly"[15]. One can however pick up quite a few other passages where is spoken clearly enough of its proximity, "the Hour is nigh, the Moon splits ..."[16] "God's decree is come, so not do hasten the point (to disbelief's force)[17]," etc. But there is here nothing exact;

[15] Q. 7:186; also 79:42, 44, etc.
[16] Q. 54:1.
[17] Q. 16:1.

one cannot but derive an impression (that emerges, moreover, from all the Qur'ân) to know that, at all times, one must await this supreme hour.

On this doctrine to which he has rightly attached a great importance, Sprenger expounds a theory that I have already talked about and that, if one extricates the hypothetical parties from it, can only reinforce this impression. According to him, Mohammed, to better convince the incredulous, reportedly threatened a temporal punishment (*zeitlich*) that is to say, a catastrophe equal to that of Sodom and Gomorrah and other cities destroyed by God's wrath. Seeing his threats not acted upon, one laughed in his face (what Muhammad, even with very little common sense, could have easily predicted). To mend his imprudence, the Prophet would have resigned himself to postponing said punishment, not indefinitely, but to the end of the world. This second threat, to be more effective than the first, necessarily implied an early date, but imprecise beyond that, and Sprenger notes, with undisguised malice, that this is great progress. He attributes it to the Christians' influence[18] who, long before Mohammed, comprehended the utility of presenting this day as nigh, but of uncertain date. How much in this are they superior to the Persians who awkwardly have a day fixed and quite far away[19]!

If I force a little, in my translation, the heckler tone of Sprenger, it is to place more securely into evidence his bias to treat Mohammed as charlatan who, driven to the wall, imagines an ingenious expedient to sell his merchandise anyway. It is singularly to diminish the Prophet's character and to consider his followers as naively credulous poor savages, not to employ stronger epithet. But this is not how one may judge the Arabs, a people of great hecklers and skeptics by temperament, whom none could dupe by so crude a retraction. To introduce, after the fact, in his

[18] Nun musste er endlich seiner Drohungen eine ganz andere Bedeutung unterschieben und auf den jüngsten Tag beziehen. Diese neue Deutung steht mit christlichen Einflüssen auf Mohammad in Zusammenhang ... *Das Leben und die Lehre*, I, p. 532.

[19] So ist doch eine grosse Verbesserung, deren sich auch das Christenthum erfreut, sie nahe zu rücken, aber die Zeit unbestimmt zu lassen. Bei den Persern war der Termin bestimmt und viel zu ferne. Ib., I, p. 536, note.

teaching, the doctrine so clearly Judeo-Christian about the end of the world, and that much to avoid the charge of false prophet, would have raised an inextinguishable laughter among the most convinced of his supporters, and would have unsealed the eyes of the greatest imbeciles. This doctrine must have been primitive.

Besides, Mohammed having predicted to his contemporaries a purely temporal disaster independently of the *post mortem* punishment, would he have been embarrassed to leave the date uncertain, as well as he has left that of the resurrection? Since Sprenger admits that the second is clearly presented as very close, one does not at all see the advantage in substituting it over the former, but one easily realizes the serious drawback. To this Sprenger could respond that Mohammed's mistake was to announce a day *fixed* for the temporal punishment[20]. But we have no proof that he had never fixed a date. The German scholar claims that this day was that when all whom God had resolved to convert would become Muslim and that it would happen only when Muhammad and the Believers would find themselves in Mecca. He cites in support the Qur'ân, 17:76-77 and 37:174-175. I translate literally the first passage. "And they had almost made thee quit the land, so as to chase thee (definitively) and then, they would not have sojourned without thee but a little time. This was the custom for those of our missionaries we sent before thee, and in our custom you will not find any change." There is indeed under an unclear form, a conditional threat, but nothing resembling a set day, nothing even announcing an explicitly separate punishment of the end of the world. As for the second passage, it is as uncompromising as possible; I translate always literally: "Turnest thou away from them up until a moment. And seest them. And they will see!" This is what Sprenger called "speaking out too

[20] [Mohammed] bekannte dass er sich, indem er sich früher etwas zu bestimmt über diesen Punkt ausgesprochen, geirrt habe..... p. 532.

precisely, *sich zu bestimmt ausgesprochen*!" This is what obliged the Prophet to retract himself hypocritically and to *give another meaning to his threats*!

If I emphasize this discussion, it is primarily because Sprenger's views are original, that they reveal the most interesting effort to penetrate Muhammad's true mind, and finally because, since I also use most of the texts on which he bases his argument, I cannot use those before having established clearly the points where I differ from his opinion.

I come to the proximity of the Hour. Sprenger (I, 533) cites, for the verse "The decree of God is come"[21], the words of Ibn Abbas, collected by Wahidi[22]. God having revealed the verse: "The hour approaches[23]", the unbelievers expressed anxiety, then, not seeing anything coming, resumed their impudence. Then God revealed the verse: "[The Day of] their Account is come for men[24]." Same unquiet, then same unbelief. So when were revealed the words "God's decree is come"; the disbelievers raised their heads, and a new revelation added, "do not do hasten it." *It was on this occasion that the Prophet said: My coming and the Hour are separated from one another as my index finger from my middle finger*.

I have highlit this last passage because it is one of the fundamental arguments of my thesis. Tabari's commentary (a century earlier than Wahidi) gives similar traditions on the sequence of revelations, but does not mention, at least about this verse, the last passage. But, in the words of Ibn Khaldun[25] and Makrizi[26], the same Tabari used it as the basis for its calculation of the exact time of the end of the world.

[21] Q. 16:1, see above, page 13 [tr. 12]

[22] The author of a commentary, of which Sprenger owned a copy. Wahidi died in 411 AH [But Ibn Khallikan tr. de Slane (Paris: 1843), 2.246-7: Wahidi died 468 / 1076]. The text has been published recently [also, English tr. Mokrane Guezzou (2008)].

[23] Q. 54:1, see above, page 13 [tr. 12]

[24] Q. 21:1.

[25] *Muqaddimah* [#3.52] de Slane tr. 2.209f. [Rosenthal tr. 204f]

Here, in a very condensed form, is what these two authors report to us on the opinions relating to the duration of the world.

Tabari (d. 310 AH) estimates the total duration of the Islamic era at five centuries, based on the following logic. The Qur'ân says (22:47): "One day before your Lord is a thousand years by your reckoning." Moreover, the Prophet said: "Compared to the existence of those who preceded you, yours is like the time between afternoon (*asr*) and sunset" and further "I have been sent at such a time that we two had, the hour and I, a span like these two (fingers)," and as he spoke, he pointed to his index and middle fingers. He had said equally: "The duration of this world will be as a week of the next world, which day is a thousand years." It happens that the interval between the afternoon and sunset is a fourteenth of the day… the same amount as separates the middle finger from the index. The world having a total existence of seven thousand years, a fourteenth of that therefore yields: five hundred years left to live from the life of the Prophet.

Souheili (d. 531 AH) naturally could not accept such calculations, even if they are so ingenious. But he is forced to admit that "we are, the hour and I, as these two (fingers)," indicating their proximity. This solution offers nothing new nor of interest to us.

As for myself, I can only side with Sprenger's view: this Prophetic saying indicates a marked proximity. In our French language, "*être comme les deux doigts de la main* [to be like two fingers of the hand]" is a common expression that indicates a relationship between two people, a close dependence, absolute, *inseparability* in a word. This is a proverbial image, taken from the very essence of humanity, which necessarily has the same meaning in all languages of the world. So there is if not certainty, at least strong presumption that Muhammad had in mind a

[26] My translation (*Mémoires de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire*, III), p. 20. [Maqrizi and Ibn Khaldun had each quoted Tabari's *Tarikh*; tr. Franz Rosenthal (SUNY, 1989), 1.181. Casanova has missed this primary here. But he will bring it to § VII and to the Complementary Note.]

dependence of the same genre, and that he wanted to say: "My arrival and that of the Hour are inseparable."

To these indications Makrizi adds a text of al-Kindi (died circa 260 AH) where is found another tradition. "You are, said the Prophet, among all the peoples who preceded you, like the white hair on the hide of the black bull, or the black hair on the hide of the white bull." [also Muslim 1.529] In other words: what you have left to live is extremely little.

Sprenger reports two more traditions, more precise. Mohammed, pointing at a young man, said: "Before he reaches old age, the Hour will detonate" and furthermore: "Within a century will survive not one man on the planet." This last prediction is reported by Masoudi[27] in this way: "There shall remain on the face of the earth after a hundred (years) not one man that has not died[28]." And the author added: "When Abou Maçoud (el Bedri) spread this prediction as from the Prophet, it excited a general terror. Ali was informed and said: 'Abou Maçoud has faithfully reported the words, but he has not understood the meaning; because the Prophet wished to say only that, in a hundred years, no one who knew him would still be alive.'" If, indeed, this is what Muhammad had wished to say, he would have made this prophecy on the cheap. Ali's interpretation obviously has no other purpose but to cut short the terror which such a saying taken literally would have caused, but it is perfectly arbitrary.

Finally another tradition presents, in a form hyperbolic and all the more striking, the intimate union of Mohammed with the end of the world: "My coming and that of the Hour, the Prophet would say, are concomitant; indeed, the latter almost arrived before me"[29]. This tradition alone,

[27] *Prairies d'or*, ed. and trans. Barbier de Maynard, IV, p. 174.
[28] I give the translation word for word.
[29] Makrizi, my translation, p. 18. [Translated again here by Stephen Shoemaker, *The Death of a Prophet* (UPenn, 2012), 172.]

if one take it for genuine, is absolutely decisive; if it were invented after the Prophet's death, it could be only a short time afterwards, and only by those who wished his upcoming return[30].

There are, moreover, outside the traditions, other texts no less characteristic that attest this close correlation. For example, the author of the Prophet's *vita* reports that a Himyarite king whose son was murdered in the territory of that Yathrib which later became Medina (that is to say, the city of the Prophet), that this king, I say, wanted, for revenge, to destroy the city. Two Jewish scholars begged him not to do so, because, they said, this city was intended to serve as a retreat to a Prophet who shall appear *at the end of time*[31]. In a commentary of the poet Kaᶜb ibn Zohayr it is said that the poet's father had a dream in which he saw a rope descend from the sky. He tried to grab it; it escaped him. He interpreted this dream as the coming of the Prophet who would be sent at the end of time and that this, Zohayr would not experience. Indeed he died shortly before Muhammad would receive revelation.

According to the historian Ibn Saad, Nafi ibn Djobeir, listing the Prophet's names to the Umayyad caliph Abd el Melik (65-68 AH), taught him of *hachir* "assembler", with these words: "He was sent with the hour to warn you before a terrible punishment." This saying is so congruent with my thesis that I have adopted it for epigraph.

What proves it further, this is the deep turmoil into which his death threw the Muslims. They refused to believe it: ""How can he die, they cried, the one to bear witness of our actions on the day of the last judgment?" Omar, the future caliph, one of the most intimate companions of the Prophet, said: "No, he is not dead, he is off to visit the Lord like formerly Moses who once

[30] We shall speak later of this hope.

[31] CAUSSIN DE PERCEVAL, *Essai*, I, p. 92. The expression: "to the end of time" fî akhiri z zamân indicates, without a shadow of a doubt, the end of the world.

disappeared for forty days. Mohammed will be returned to us as Moses was. Those who pretend him dead are false Muslims who need to be cut to pieces!"

It was then that Abu Bakr, the Prophet's stepfather, cautious man and fine politician, intervened: "O Muslims, he said, God alone does not die. Do you not remember this verse of the Qur'ân: Mohammed is only a missionary; died before him have others who had also received missions from heaven" and especially this other verse: "You will die, Mohammed, and they too will die".

Of these verses, especially the last so explicit, none, indeed, of all those who met the Prophet, none had any memory; but Abu Bakr had been dubbed by the Prophet himself: *as Siddiq* "the Truthful"; there was only to bow to him[32].

As if a saying so characteristic was unknown to the Companions of the Prophet! If they were so little aware of the most important verses, one will accord us that the forgers had a field-day and that Abu Bakr the Truthful could, if he wished it, set up an entire Qur'ân from fantasy. No one, around him, could have contradicted it. Are we then not allowed to argue that the second verse, at least, was created from scratch after the death of Mohammed and because of this death?[33]

[32] CAUSSIN DE PERCEVAL, *Essai*, III, p. 324, after *Sirat-erraçoul* (= Ibn Hisham) and Ibn Khaldun. See the story of Ibn Hisham in the translation of Weil, II, 348-349 and 353 [A. Guillaume tr. *The Life of Muhammad* (Oxford University: 1955) 682-3]. In the final passage, Omar relies on a verse from the Koran (2:143) to explain his mistake; he saw there the proof that Mohammed would attend in his lifetime, at the Judgment. According to other texts, Omar would have compared the death of Mohammed, not to the absence of Moses, but to the disappearance of Jesus, who, according to Muslims, was not put to death by the Jews, but taken to heaven (Chahrastani, trans. Haarbrücker, p. 17 [Kazi tr. 18]). I am inclined more towards the second version: Omar had to be of those who desired the return. See § VI.

[33] In § IV, we will see if, assuming authentic, the verse is not susceptible of another interpretation: namely, that this is the time when everyone (including the Prophet) must die to resuscitate immediately after.

The authenticity of the verse was questioned for the first time by Silvestre de Sacy (*Journal des Savants*, 1832, p. 535 ff.), then by Weil (*Einleitung in den Koran*, 43). The refutation of Mr. Nöldeke (*Geschichte*, 197-201) has convinced neither Weil, maintaining his given views in *Einleitung*, 2nd edition, [#2.1] p. 52 [Frank Sanders and Harry Dunning tr. "Introduction", *The Biblical World*, vv. 5.3-6.2 (1895); 5.5.344] nor Mr. Hirschfeld (*New researches into ... the Qoran*, 139). In *Geschichte der Chalifen* (I, 15, note 1) Weil has concluded that Mohammed

What happened there really? Did the auditors volunteer as accomplices of this pious fraud, including very well the high political reasons which motivated it? Were there discussions or prior agreement? There are no Arab historians who can inform us of that, and we must content ourselves with the precious confession that has escaped them. Along with the phrases which we have cited and which are also unconscious confession, it abundantly proves that the early Muslims considered their prophet as the last of all, the one who was to preside at the Last Judgment and at this supreme moment, be their advocate before God.

This belief, which received a denial so unexpected, will adapt to circumstances, and we see the consequences unfold throughout Islam, but first we have to go back and try to explain how and why Mohammed had conceived it.

believed himself immortal. Mr. Nöldeke, loc. cit., said that if this belief had been an article of faith, or even a half-article of faith, his death would have resulted in the annihilation of all Islam. [And Nöldeke maintained his view: ii.81; Behn tr. 279-82.] This is, indeed, what had to happen, and it took the genius of Abu Bakr to stop the appalling debacle that followed this death.

I must say that the term immortality, Unsterblichkeit, is not strictly true. Mohammed did not feel more immortal than his contemporaries; he only thought he would not die before the imminent end of the world. Besides that most important nuance, Weil's conclusion seems legitimate to me. This is the ray of light which illuminates the entire early history of Islam.

III

We return here into a more-hypothetical domain and where the facts have been presented to us by the Arab authors under forms more legendary than historical. Let us see however whether, by the light of the principle that we are posing, it will not be possible to distinguish between the legend and the history.

Let us note, first, that the doctrine of Mohammed, such as we just summarised it, presents a curious parallel with that of the Christ, as Renan expounded it[34], on the kingdom of God or the resurrection. "The apocalyptic ideas of Jesus may be summed up: … will be an immense revolution, an anguish like the pains of child-birth, a palingenesis, … preceded by dark calamities and heralded by strange phenomena. ... On the great day … the Messiah will appear… then the dead will rise and the Messiah proceed to judgment. … all this was taken literally. … If the first Christian generation possessed one profound and constant belief, it was that the end of the world was near, and that the great 'revelation' of Christ was about to take place. The … proclamation, 'The time is at hand,' … opens and closes the Apocalypse … Jesus … questioned as to the time of his advent, … refused to reply; indeed, he declared that the date of the great day

[34] *Vie de Jésus* (ed. 1863), p. 272. [William Hutchinson tr. *Life of Jesus* (London: Walter Scott, 1897), 172-5] It is not contrary to that which authorised Catholic writers admit for the belief of the first Christians. The Abbé de Broglie (*Les Origines de l'Islamisme*, in the *Revue des Religions*, t. I, p. 22) says positively: "The early Christians had their eyes fixed on the future life. The belief in the Second Coming, an upcoming return of Christ, was widespread in the early centuries." He contrasts this belief to that of Muslims. "It is to the empire of the world that they pretended first .... They believed with no doubt in the end of the world, and the doctrine of Jesus Christ's return in their belief took the form of the hope of the Mahdi's coming. But they postponed these events to the distant future." The second view is arguable only long after the death of Mohammed. I will try to show that the first Muslims had the same mindset as the first Christians. On this mindset, see again what the Father Dillenseger says about the Second Coming (*De l'authenticité de IIe Petri*, in *Mélanges de la Faculté orientale de Beyrouth*, II, pp. 207-208).

was known only by the Father, … would be a surprise…; that we must be on our guard, always ready to set out; etc. … But his declarations on the proximity of the catastrophe leave no room for any equivocation. 'This generation,' he says, 'shall not pass away, till all things be accomplished.' 'There be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.' … 'Ye know how to discern the face of the heaven; but ye cannot discern the signs of the times.'" And Renan concludes the explanation I have just abbreviated with these statements: "such a doctrine … could have no future ... Had the doctrine of Jesus been simply belief in an approaching end of the world [read: if his successors had persisted in presenting his doctrine only in that form], it would certainly be now sleeping in oblivion[35]."

From there we can already conclude that this primitive belief, Mohammed's starting-point, is none other than that of the Christ. *Maran atha*, "Our Lord cometh" was, continues Renan, a password among Believers[36]. Mohammed said *atâ amr Allah* "God's decree cometh". The belief in the much-desired kingdom's arrival was called the Good Tidings; the doctrine had no other name for the Christ's disciples[37]. The Qur'ân says: "A succor (coming) from God and a victory at hand; announce thou the good tidings to the Believers: *bachchiri'l Mouminin*[38]". Finally we know that Islamism represents the end of the world in the Christian form: revolutions and disasters, appearance of the Antichrist then of the Messiah who presides over the Last Judgment. The sole original addition is that of the Mahdi, who, as we shall see, is but an *avatar* of Mohammed in person, a return, under a form and a new name, of the Prophet who, in the first Islam, would actually appear prior to the Antichrist and the Messiah.

[35] P. 281. [tr. 177]
[36] P. 276. [tr. 174]
[37] P. 193. [tr. 122]
[38] Q. 61:13.

We are thus led to think that Mohammed belonged or was affiliated with a Christian sect that believed the times were overturned and waited only for the coming of a prophet already predicted by Jesus Christ as the Paraclete, whose Arabic equivalent, according to the Qur'ân, was Ahmed[39]. But Ahmed is another form of Mohammed.

The Arab writers have given us many stories that, in part legendary, did not testify here any less their conviction that at the time of Mohammed, some Christians believed in the appearance of a prophet and recognised that this prophet was none other than Mohammed. Even non-Christians had this prescience, as we saw in the dream of Zohayr[40]. These texts are well known to Orientalists, but it is not unuseful to group them so as to bring out the significance.

The most curious is the one Sprenger has noted first[41] and that Mr. Huart has reproduced in a recent study on sources of the Qur'ân[42]. It is in the famous collection called Kitab al Aghani "Book of Songs", so precious for the data it provides us on the pre-Islamic period.

Umayya ibn Abu s-Salt was aware of these doctrines and he hoped to be, himself, the designated Prophet. He had consulted a learned monk who told him: "After Jesus Christ, there will be six *returns* [until the end of the world]; the sixth to take place in our days." Not much longer after, he would receive a bitter disappointment, as the monk told him: "The *return* has taken place".

What are the *returns*? In a marginal-note to Bulak's edition, it is said that the word means "centuries". Evidently, Omayya was able to learn from the monk that between his time and that of Christ, six centuries would pass, but the narrative proves overplentifully that there was something else, and these six centuries (or *returns*) constituted a fateful and definitive period.

[39] 61:6.
[40] See above, p. 18. [tr. 18]
[41] I, p. 113. [Hans-Jörg Döhla tr. "On Umayya" ed. Ibn Warraq, *Koranic Allusions* (Prometheus, 2013), 1.2.33-58; 40.]
[42] *Une nouvelle source du Coran* (*Journal asiatique*, 10th series, t. IV, p. 125 et sq.). [Ibn Warraq tr. 3.59-76.]

This is what I have rendered with the words in brackets which give the true meaning of the passage and which had to be deleted later, while in other similar predictions that we have already mentioned[43], they were kept inadvertently.

The interpretation of the word *radjat* in this text by "century" is absolutely arbitrary. Where speaking of a prophet, it means *re-appearance*, and it is in this sense that the AbdAllah ibn Saba took it, when, under Othman's caliphate, he roused the people, by telling them: "You who believe in the return (*radjat*) of Jesus Christ, why do not you believe in the return of Mohammed[44]"? This return of the Christ, for Abd Allah ibn Saba, is unique and closes the lifespan of the world; for the monk, it takes six *returns* in all. Indeed we already know this by the Gospel, shortly after Jesus' resurrection; we see that which will be the last; there remains here four for which the monk has probably kept the secret. I will note more later my feeling about the significance of the number six; for now, I would recall only the link affirmed by the monk between the mission of Christ and that of the Prophet.

Best known and perhaps even more suggestive is the tale of the monk Bahira, who was in immediate rapport with Mohammed, as the Arab historians say. It is not in my scope to discuss the level of this episode's authenticity. I just want to recount it in summary to show its points of contact with the story above.

The legend comes in two main forms. In one, Muhammad, still young, is seen, during one of his trips to Syria, by a Christian monk Bahira (George or Nestor, per some variants). He

[43] See above, page 8. [tr. 8]

[44] This is the doctrine which birthed the concept of the Mahdi (Mohammed's return) as we established it. We have already alluded to this on page 19, note 1. [tr. 19 n. 32]

recognizes the preordained prophet and commends his companions to take good care of this child called to high destinies[45].

In another form, it is the wife of Muhammad, Khadija, who, alerted by the monk Bahira, recognizes the prophecy in her husband. The Byzantines have reproduced this version giving to the Arabs' Bahira the name of Sergius[46].

Sprenger, at several points, considers this Bahira as the leader of a Christian sect to which Mohammed would have belonged. Sometimes (I, p. 34) he is the propagator of the hanifite cult at Mecca "der Verbreiter der Hanyferei in Makka," sometimes (II, p. 210 and 367) he is a *Rahmanist* and in the same passages he is named teacher, mentor, inspirer of Muhammad, "der Lehrer des Propheten: Mentor der und Gewährsmann des Mohammed". Breifly, the sharp thought of the German orientalist is that a Christian sect existed that believed in the coming of a prophet and that inspired Muhammad. The Muslims have a great reverence for this Bahira, and an author quoted by Sprenger[47] mentions him among the people of the Scripture (Christians or Jews) who converted to Islam.

Another character, long considered legendary and whose historicity is established only recently, is the famous Moukaukis of Egypt, whom pious biographers mention among the Companions of the Prophet and who did, it is said, secretly confess Islam.

In a recent book, Mr. Butler[48] has studied the matter and put beyond doubt that the name of moukaukis was given to the Melkite patriarch of Alexandria: Cyrus. But he did not see that this name is applied previously to another patriarch: one monophysite and heretical in the eyes of the

[45] CAUSSIN DE PERCEVAL, *Essai*, I, 319-340; MASOUDI, *Prairies d'or* (tr. Barber de Meynard), I, 146; IV, 124, 153, etc.

[46] SPRENGER, II, 384, according to his translation (in English) of Masoudi.

[47] Ibid., I, 46.

[48] *The Arab Conquest of Egypt*, 1902, p. 508 ff. He had already dealt with the subject in the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, XXIII, 6.

Emperor of Byzantium. I have already had occasion to indicate that curious circumstance, and as here we leave the field of legend to approach that of history, it is not unuseful to get into whatever details on the personality of the Coptic patriarch, Mohammed's friend: Benjamin.

Since the Copts had welcomed the heresy of Eutyches, a veritable schism reigned in Egypt. Copts refused to recognize the patriarch appointed by the emperor of Constantinople and so there were usually two patriarchs: one Greek (Melkite), the other Coptic (Monophysite). Around the year 616, the Persians conquered Egypt and did not return it to the Byzantine emperor until 630. The Greek patriarch had fled; the Copt remained alone and accommodated well to the Persian occupation. Around 620, he was Benjamin, and I think he had to play under the Persians an important role, similar to the one the patriarchs are still playing in the Ottoman empire, where they represent vis-à-vis the ruling authority the Christian populations which they administer under their responsibility. It is likely of the Persians that they accorded him this title unknown until now: kaukios in Coptic, *moukaukis* in Arabic. One has here presented various etymologies; none seems satisfactory to me because they relate more or less directly to the character of Cyrus, who is only the second or maybe the third[49] moukaukis; – and this *a priori* is not likely.

What is certain here is that at the time Mohammed sent his emissary to Benjamin, he was still an important person whom, in my opinion, the Persians had installed. It is, indeed, in the year 6 AH (May 627 to May 628) that the Prophet sent Hatib to the moukaukis of the time.

The earliest Muslim historian of Egypt, Ibn Abd el Hakam, has given us, according to traditions dating back to contemporaries, a curious account of the interview[50]. The ambassador

[49] One named George seems to have preceded Cyrus as Melkite patriarch. Arabs give most often to moukaukis a mixed name of George and Benjamin. See what I say in my translation of Makrizi (*Mém. de l'Institut français d'archéol. orient. du Caire*, III, p. 114, note 2).

[50] MAKRIZI, translated by Bouriant (*Mémoires de la Mission archéologique française du Caire*, vol. XVII), pp. 79-81. [Famously, Butler had had no direct access to Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam's *Futuḥ Miṣr*, either. In 1922 Charles Cutler Torrey would edit *Futuḥ Miṣr*, in which printing this tale takes up p. 44f. That part has been translated to

sent to the Copts' sovereign this message: "Come to Islam which is the definitive religion. Moses prophesied Jesus. Jesus prophesied Mohammed; we invite you to believe in the Qur'ân, as thou thyself promptest the people of the Bible to believe in the Gospel. It is not to deny thee the religion of Christ, on the contrary; it is to ask thee to conform closely to it." The moukaukis replied: "I was awaiting, indeed, a prophet, but I thought he would come from Syria," and he wondered if Mohammed had displayed the expected signs, the seal of prophethood between his shoulders, etc. These are the same signs that the monk Bahira had noticed in the young Muhammad.

I find it difficult to reject as wholly and purely apocryphal, such a story, and I readily admit that the patriarch of Alexandria was struck by the mainly Christian spirit of this new doctrine, and to find again in what they said of the new Prophet, the ideas that were current in his time, in Syria and in Egypt. The speech of Hatib is, moreover, a paraphrase of this verse of the Qur'ân (61:6): "Jesus, son of Mary, said: O Israelites, I am the one whom God sends to you to confirm the Pentateuch you received before me and to announce the good tidings, *moubachchiran*, that a prophet will come after me whose name is Ahmed". Ahmed is another name for Mohammed and, according to Muslims, is that of the Paraclete. The Paraclete, indeed, such as the gospel of Saint John intends[51], has put the seal to the Christ's religion and its coming can only coincide with the end of the world. The reception given by the patriarch to the ambassador, the precious gifts he gave him back to his Prophet, later, the deep friendship that bound him to the conquerors of Egypt when he held anew the seat which Cyrus had fled, prove that Benjamin had a real sympathy for the new doctrine. Perhaps it is to politics, for unknown reasons (the history of

English by Yasmin Hilloowala, PhD dissertation (U of AZ, 1998). For the overall text see also Christopher James Wright's own PhD dissertation (U of CA, 2006), using Torrey but apparently unaware of Hilloowala.]

[51] XIV, 16-17; XV, 26; XVI, 7-8, 13.

Egypt, at this time, we know very poorly), that we must attribute this sympathy. The Arabs have here attributed it no less very nicely to a community of opinions with their Prophet. As for the other embassies sent by Mohammed, either to the emperor or the king of Persia, or even to the Negus of Abyssinia, they are far from giving the same picture. It is unexplained why they would have made exception for a character whose real historical role was not even suspected outside the particulars of this embassy. Anyway, our impression is strengthened that Christians accepted indeed, at the time of Mohammed, the coming of the Prophet, whose coming, despite the perhaps prejudiced silence of the Arab traditions, is necessarily and closely linked with the return of the Messiah and the last Judgment.

We have seen that the Christian authors admit the influence of their Sergius. In a letter to Abd al Massih the Kindite, a Muslim, Abdallah ibn Ismail, declares his sympathy for the followers of Nestorius: "They are the closest to the Muslims in their beliefs. The Prophet has praised them and is linked to them by solemn commitments. He wished to recognize in this way the assistance which the Nestorian monks had lent him by predicting the high mission to which he was called. Also, Mohammed bore them his most sincere affection and he liked to converse with them[52]."

In like vein is attached the episode of Selman the Persian, which Mr. Clément Huart has recently recounted[53]. Still young, attracted by the Christian cult, he learns from holy men he frequents "the arrival of a prophet charged to renew the religion of Abraham and to spread it among the Arabs". After various romantic adventures, he eventually joins Muhammad to become one of his most loyal companions.

[52] LAMMENS, *Le chantre des Umeyyades* in *Journal asiatique*, 9th series, vol. IV (1894), p. 120. Cf. MUIR, *The Apology of al Kindi*, pp. 1 and 2.

[53] *Mélanges Hartwig Derenbourg* (1909), p. 297 ff.

To conclude this chapter, I recall the curious adventure of Tamim ad-Dari, as he told it to Mohammed, who in turn transmitted it to his disciples. Having embarked at sea with a certain number of his cousins, he had been tossed by storm onto an island. The castaways saw there a huge she-beast covered in long hair. "Who are you, they asked. I am, she said, the *djassasat* 'spy' who shall appear at the end of time[54]." Tamim reports from her a few other words. She tells them: "Attention! the master of the castle!" As they watched, here they were in the presence of a man bound with iron chains, attached to an iron pillar, whose appearance was such-and-such. He spoke to them and questioned them. This man was the Dajjâl (Antichrist). He taught them many *malhamat*s[55] and said he would not enter the city of the Prophet[56]. Thus, by the avowal of the traditionalists, Mohammed is considered the contemporary of the Antichrist. Van Vloten tells us that the Arabs call the Antichrist *al masih al Dajjâl*, "the false messiah" according to the Aramaic: "*daggolai mechîkhê* (Daniel)" or "*mechîkhê-daggolè* (Saint Matthew)" and that if the Qur'ân does not mention it, the tradition mentions a Madinese Jew, Sâf ibn Saîd (or ibn Sayyâd), whom the Prophet said would be the Dajjâl[57].

I have said enough, I think, to exhibit the immediate origins of the doctrine of Mohammed. As to determine the true nature of the Christian sect whence the Arab Prophet has drawn his convictions, the present state of our knowledge of the history of Christianity at this time renders

[54] The Arabic aorist means both present and future; if the idea of the future is not indicated formally, the direction can oscillate between the present and a not far future, as, for example, in French: "attendez-moi; j'arrive dans un instant" or in English: "I depart tomorrow," etc. It is in this sense that one must hear the words: "shall appear".

[55] On the meaning of this word, see § V.

[56] MASOUDI, *Prairies d'Or* (editing and translation Barbier de Maynard), IV, p. 28. I have, in my translation, constrained the text very carefully. [This text should be triangulated with David Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic* (Darwin Press, 2002), 117-9.]

[57] *Recherches sur la domination arabe*, etc., Amsterdam, 1894, p. 59. Excellent little book unfortunately disfigured by printing errors. [Also now Cook, 110-7.]

this problem, I think, still unreachable[58]. I leave it as is and thus continue my study on Mohammed's intent and the transformation that this had to endure after his death.

[58] According to Mr. Friedländer, that would be Docetism (*The heterodoxies of the Shiites* in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, XXIX (1909) pp. 29-30). His reconciliations are very ingenious, and I gladly would share his opinion, were direct evidences not still lacking.

IV[59]

Thus, in the Qur'ân, the Hour is represented as nigh, as imminent, but without precise indication of time, whereas the more explicit tradition (Sunna) binds as close as possible the Prophet's mission with the coming of the hour. It remains to be seen whether, in the Qur'ân, there is no trace of this mutual dependence and, in particular, if, as I have already hinted (page 20, note 1 [tr. 19 n. 33]), the death of Muhammad is not included in the universal death, immediate consequence of the supreme catastrophe.

"One will sound the trumpet, and those who are in heaven and those on earth will be stricken, save whom God wills (to except); then it will sound a second time, and hereat, made to stand, they will be watching out[60]."

"The day when shall sound the trumpet, while those in heaven and those on earth will be terrified, save whom God wills (to except); and all will go to it, prostrate[61]."

In the first verse, the word that I have rendered, according to the etymology, by "stricken" is understood by commentators as implying a real death; consequently the continuation of the verse indicates resurrection. The term "stand" *kiyam* recalls, in fact, the expression *kiyamat*, which means "the action to stand up" and which is regularly used in Arabic, according to the Qur'ân, to designate the resurrection. The second verse is much less explicit; the two phases are not as clearly marked and the word "terrified" can hardly refer to death. Is it earlier and has

[59] Throughout this chapter, for the sake of argument, we shall pose as authentic every verse of the Qur'ân taken in itself, without considering the context, except in the case where several verses are undoubtedly of the same group.
[60] 39:68.
[61] 27:87.

Mohammed's mind achieved, later, more precision? Is the latter only an incorrect form of the former, due to the memory failure of a secretary or of a companion of the Prophet and yet admitted to the sacred text[62]? This much I cannot discuss here. I wish simply to indicate the two forms, one strong and precise, the other a little indecisive, by which the Qur'ân announces a universal catastrophe in heaven and on earth, an exemption possible for the privileged few, lastly a phase of waiting.

To the former verse 39:68 Tabari gives us in his grand commentary, a very curious datum. After having specified that it must be seen as a universal death, he tells us, according to the traditionist Katada, that Muhammad had obtained from an angel of God that: 1. he shall be the first for whom the grave will open up; 2. he shall be the first intercessor. The Prophet added, "Then, raising my head, I will find Moses seizing (already) the throne (of God). God knows if he is to be struck down after the first striking or not." Tabari also quotes Abu Horeirat who said he heard these words of the Prophet: "I will be the first to raise his head and, at this time, Moses will seize one of the feet of the throne, and I do not know if he will have raised his head before me or if he will have been of those whom God will have excepted."

The introduction of Moses in this tradition appears to me very tendentious. Indeed, in the passage in question, it cannot allude to those who have already died, and Tabari justly remarks: this can apply only to those who are still alive. If it were otherwise, Moses and other Prophets should undergo a second death. Although the Qur'ân knows well a second death, that one is reserved only for sinners, for it says that the elected shall not know, in paradise, death, except the

[62] The Qur'ân is full of these variants, which, in my opinion, have been introduced in the text upon the faith of this or that reciter. It is precisely to cut short the alarming multiplicity of variants that the Caliph Othman imposed a text final and necessarily arbitrary. Thence, in large part, the incoherence so justly reproached in the revealed book.

first death (already undergone)[63]. The infidels, by contrast, will cry at the coming moment: "Do we die (again) besides our first death[64]." Formerly they had said: "This is only our first death and we shall not be resurrected[65]." Finally, admitting defeat, they will say, "Lord, you have made us die twice, and you made us live twice; we acknowledge our sins; is there to get out (of hell) some path?[66]". Note that here, the Qur'ân seems directly inspired by the Apocalypse of St. John. "To the victor (*i.e.* the righteous) I shall give him to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God[67]. The victor shall not be punished by the second death[68]. This is the second death, the lake of fire[69]. Unbelievers, idolaters, etc., their lot is in the burning lake of fire and brimstone which is the second death[70]." Thus the infidels have not been raised for some time, and their second life will be short-lived. The conclusion therefore is that the only souls who die at the moment of the Hour will be those who are contemporaries. If therefore the traditions reported by Tabari have a foundation, they can only mean one thing, which is that Muhammad, struck down by the Hour, will be the first to be raised up. In this case the Prophet will not be of those whom God has wanted to exempt.

Thus understood, the Qur'ânic formula: "Everyone must die," is just natural. "Everyone dies, and you will receive your reward at the resurrection day[71]. Everyone dies, and we submit you (for life) for good and ill by way of trial, and to us you will be returned[72]. Everyone dies, and to

[63] Q. 44:56.
[64] Q. 37:58-9.
[65] Q. 44:35.
[66] Q. 40:11.
[67] τῷ νικῶντι δώσω αὐτῷ φαγεῖν ἐκ τοῦ ξύλου τῆς ζωῆς, ὅ ἐστιν ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ τοῦ θεοῦ (II, 7).
[68] ὁ νικῶν οὐ μὴ ἀδικηθῇ ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ δευτέρου (II, 11).
[69] οὗτος ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερός ἐστιν, ἡ λίμνη τοῦ πυρός (XX, 14).
[70] τοῖς δὲ δειλοῖς καὶ ἀπίστοις … καὶ εἰδωλολάτραις … τὸ μέρος αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ λίμνῃ τῇ καιομένῃ πυρὶ καὶ θείῳ, ὅ ἐστιν ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερος (XXI, 8) The Targums labeled also "second death" the punishment of the wicked or last Judgment. See P. Humbert, *Le Messie dans le Targum des Prophètes* (Lausanne, 1911), p. 60.
[71] Q. 3:185.
[72] Q. 21:35.

us you will be returned[73]." It is not irrelevant to note that each time this formula is set, it is linked to the idea of resurrection. It excludes thereby positively survival, without death, to anyone, and the restriction in the opening verses which we have cited disappears here.

"You will die (O Muhammad) and they will die; - Then, at the day of resurrection, with your master, you will plead[74]. We have not granted to any man eternity; Is that if you die, they will be eternal?[75]. Mohammed is but a prophet; prophets have passed before him. Is that if he dies (of disease) or if he is killed, you will turn your heels?[76]." Here, the Prophet's death is expressed only once in a positive manner and in a form equivalent to the first formula: All will die, these and yourself; it is at the day of resurrection when will be settled your differences. But in this, and again in the other two verses where the possibility of death is considered, there is no formal proof that Muhammad must necessarily die before the Hour. In retrospect we will find, through the Qur'ânic text as it has come to us, more than one passage stating the *possibility* for the Prophet to survive until the Hour and of others containing a promise of God, more or less veiled, to assist him there.

The most curious of these passages are those which say positively to the Prophet: it may be that you attend it; it may be that you die before. Here they are, translated as literally as possible.

"Or we will make thee see a part of what we threaten them, or we will make thee die; and to us is their return; so God will be witness to what they make do[77]. Have patience; God's promise is true; or we will make thee see a part of what we threaten them, or we will make thee die and

[73] Q. 29:57.

[74] 39:30-1. V. 31 seems closely linked to the previous and together form parallelism with the triple formula above. V. 30 is that which Abu Bakr recited after the Prophet's death. See above, page 19. [tr. 19]

[75] 21:34. This verse is immediately followed by the second form of the above formula and appears to adhere there to later ideas.

[76] 3:144. This is also one of the verses recited by Abu Bakr. How could the Muslims ignore it, or have forgotten it? If it is authentic, it can only be on condition that the hypothesis (because there was a hypothesis) had been considered a pure figure of speech.

[77] 10:46.

you to us they will be brought[78] . Or we will make thee see a part of what we threaten them, or we will make thee die. Thou hast in thy charge only the message (of events) and to our charge is the affair[79].” The phrase “we will make thee die” here is wholly different from the one we previously used; it has a very special character and, for my part, I doubt it has the traditional sense which I conserved in my translation. The positive sense seems to be: “recall”. When he says: “The angel of death who has commanded you will recall you; then to your master you shall return”[80] the meaning is not doubtful. But when we read: “God gathers the souls at the time of their death, and those that die not (he recalls them) during their sleep; he keeps those whose death is decided, and he restores the rest for a term fixed[81]”, is it not legitimate to ask if the word truly contains, when used alone, the idea of death? Furthermore God said to Jesus, “I will recall you and I will raise you to me”[82], while the pretended crucifixion and death of the messiah Jesus is expressly denied in a famous passage: “You have not really killed him; but God raised him to him[83].” So God, in recalling him, did not make him die, and nothing else prevents interpreting in the same way God's words about the Prophet. If Omar knew these verses about the alternative promise to the Prophet, this is how he should have interpreted them, as we have seen, he said, first, that Mohammed had gone to God like Jesus Christ[84]. Anyway, the idea is that, perhaps, God will retire him from the world before the time of the infidels’ punishment. It is expressed in this form, in another passage: “Or, we will raise thee and we will take our restitution from them; or we will make thee see what we have threatened them and we will be their masters[85].” So God

[78] 40:77.
[79] 13:40.
[80] 32:11.
[81] 39:42, cf. 6:60: “God gathers you in the night, etc.”.
[82] 3:55.
[83] 4:157-8. This assertion is the main point common with Docetism.
[84] Or like Moses. See above, page 19, note 1. [tr. 19 n. 32]
[85] 43:41-2.

is still uncertain: he has not fixed Mohammed's fate. So there are many chances for either alternative. Nothing strikes us more unlikely than that this God, master of destinies, who has not yet resolved a question so simple, as that the end of the world has, as he repeats to him often, an assigned term. This term is established in time by God himself: he cannot ignore if the Prophet's life will proceed or will not proceed further. Are all these passages not suspect of intentional alteration; has not the second clause for alternative been introduced afterwards and the primitive statement corrected by adding "or, or well"?

This alteration was possible in verses occurring in isolation. This is no longer so in the verses' overall context where the thought is evidently as follows: God urges his Prophet to patience, the infidels can have their fun in the meantime, but God will not abandon him and, *when they are present*, will punish them. Many suras end like this. I choose the fifteenth as the most precise, from verse 85.

85. And we have not created the heavens and the earth and that which is between them save with the truth, and the Hour is coming; so forgive with a beautiful indulgence.

86. Verily, thy master is the Creator, the Wise.

87. Already we have granted thee seven blessings[86] and the glorious Qur'ân.

88. Strain not they gaze at the good which We grant to some among them (the infidels), bother thyself not on their account, and lower thy wing on the believers.

89. And say: Me, I am a plain warner.

94. So proclaim that which thou art commanded, and withdraw from the polytheists.[87]

95. We suffice thee against the hecklers

[86] The word used here is usually attached to the root: double, repeat; but this same root has the sense of "lend, equip with good qualities, etc.". In the first sense, one interprets the seven things repeated by verses or suras of the Koran. However it is visible here that it means something other than the Koran.

[87] Verses 90, 91, 92 and 93 appear to have been inserted here arbitrarily. God says he will punish those who break up the Qur'ân, etc.

96. Who set with Allah another god; they will learn.

97. Yes, we know that thy heart is anguished by the discourse they hold,

98. But celebrate the praise of thy master, and prostrate thyself.

99. And worship thy master, until cometh unto thee the *Certain*.

There is no doubt here, and the commentators agree, that the *Certain* refers to the Hour. So it is formally told to the Prophet that the Hour will approach him; the Arabic verb used in verse 99 is the same as in the 85: "and the Hour approaches".

The prophet's whole spirit is there; the time he believed so close is put on hold; the unbelievers mock him for this prediction; it is necessary, so that he does not despair, for the Lord to remind him of the constant favor which which he has honored him, and to urge him be patient, assuring that the Hour will arrive, with them present. Nothing can destroy the precise meaning of the last words: it is a formal promise. What God has already given to the Prophet is a guarantee of the validity of his promise, and that is a reason for patience. Here are similar exhortations:

"And if not for a word earlier (come) from thy master and a term assigned, there would have (already) been a judgment.

"Bear with patience what they say and celebrate the praise of thy master ere the rising of the sun and ere its rest...

"Strain not they gaze upon that which we grant to some among them, enjoying of the life of the world (that we gave them) to test them…. [88]

"Have patience, God's promise is truth and may those who have no certainty not frighten thee.[89]

"They say: 'When is this *victory*, if you (the believers) are honest?'

[88] 20:129-131.
[89] 30:60 (end).

"Say: the day of the *victory*, those who had been miscreants (beforehand), their faith will not aid them and will they not be reprieved.

"Turn thee from them and await: they are awaiting.[90]

"Withdraw from them up to a *time*

"And watch them and they will watch.

"Would they hasten my punishment?

. . .

"Withdraw from them a *time*

"And watch them and they will watch.[91]"

The *time*, mentioned so vaguely, recalls the assigned term to which God is committed. It is, in any case, the time of judgment, as evidenced by a very similar phrase: "This (the Qur'ân) is but a warning to the world. You know the *tidings* after a *time*[92]." This *tidings*, however, is that which gives its name to Sura 78. "What are they discussing? - On the great *tidings* - The one on which they dispute. - Yes, they will know! – And again, yes, they will know![93]"

Here are a few sura-endings in the same spirit:

"Be thus indulgent to their gaze and say: Peace! and they will know![94]

"So observe; they are in observation.[95]

"Bear with patience what they say, and celebrate the praise of thy master…

[90] 32:28-30 (end). The victory spoken of is the triumph of Mohammed over his opponents by the arrival of the predicted Hour. Cf. the famous verse: "a succor (comes) from God and a victory nigh; announce the good news to the believers" (61:13). It is a mystical victory that has nothing to do with the conquest of Mecca.

[91] 37:174-176, 178-179 (the sura has 182 verses). On verses 174-175, see Sprenger's interpretation, above, page 15. [tr. 14]

[92] 38:87-88 (end).

[93] 78:1-5. I consider these five verses like the first revealed to the Prophet whose name: nabi is etymologically related to the news or naba. It is he who is charged by God to teach to the Jews and Christians that the question of the Messiah and the Last Judgment which made the subject of their dispute will be finally resolved, and they are going to be settled.

[94] 43:89 (end).

[95] 44:18 (end).

"Turn ear to the day when the herald calls from a near place.

"The day when they will hear the cry in truth; that is the day of sortie.

…

"The day when the earth breaks apart for them to cast away quickly...[96]

"So leave them be, until they meet their day, in which they will be stricken,

"The day when their guile will naught avail them, nor will they be helped.

…

"And attend with patience thy master's judgement; for thou art under our eyes. Celebrate the praise of thy master, when thou risest

"And, in the night, celebrate him, and at the setting of the stars.[97]

"Be therefore that which is revealed to thee and keep patience, until God judge; he is the best of judges.[98]

"And keep patience, here patience is only by God; grieve not on their account, and anguish not because of that which they devise; God is with those who believe and do good.[99]"

I wanted to give all these passages to show how the same concern recurs like a refrain, with quite a number of variants, sometimes with identical terms. One reads there the poignant and constant concern of the Prophet, despised, ridiculed, threatened, and waiting in vain for the promised hour. There are indications that, at times, he falters; if the revelation should stop, he will despair. But it did not abandon him: "And if we had not supported thee, thou already might have inclined to them a little. - Then we would have made thee taste double life and double

[96] 50:39a, 41-42, 44a (45 verses in the sura).
[97] 52:45-6, 48-9 (end).
[98] 10:109 (end).
[99] 16:127-8 (end).

death, then thou wouldst have found against us no help[100].” This passage summons up an observation. We remember that the double death is the punishment for the unbelievers; but the double life is for all those who, once dead, will rise. If therefore Muhammad, steadfast in its faith, did not fall under the scope of this divine threat, it is that he must have only one life and, exceptionally, does not revive. We saw at the beginning of this chapter, such an exception voiced as possible; and is it not natural that Mohammed had hoped to be one of the beneficiaries? We thus arrive at the conclusion that God promised to the Prophet that he would not die, even at the moment of universal catastrophe: the double life would be spared him, and *a fortiori* the double death. How to harmonise this with the so formal passage: “You will die and they will die” and whose origin is known rightly as suspect? Let one remove it[101], and the death of the Prophet is no longer considered only as a hypothesis, as a conditional threat. By this, we return to our starting point and we explain the unbelief of the Muslims: "How can he be dead, this Prophet who must be our witness (at the last judgment[102])?

I cannot close this chapter on the Prophet’s death without reporting a wholly different perspective. If there be contradiction, it is not imputable to me. The Qur’ân presents diverse aspects that doubtless reflect changes in the Prophet’s mind, but that may be due, much more than we suspect, to foreign interpretations glossed into the official revision[103]. Following this standpoint, the Prophet died (actually or metaphorically) before the revelation, and God would have restored him to life by a special favor. Here is the enigmatic passage to which I refer: “Or is

[100] 17:74-5.

[101] It should, moreover, be noted that there is no absolute proof that “thou shalt die” addresses the Prophet. This verse and the next (which can attach to it without difficulty), are all in fact isolated in the sura and might be transposed. We will see later that, in another passage of the Qur’ân, the commentators consider the “thou” pronoun as not addressing Mohammed. However, in both cases, this assumption seems implausible.

[102] See above, page 19. [tr. 19]

[103] In the current state of the Koran, to present here only one aspect unique upon the given issue, would be arbitrary and systematic. It would imitate, in another sense, the error of the commentators who always have an explanation conforming to their Muslim viewpoint and to their blind respect for the text.

he who was dead and whom we have raised to life and whom we gave a light thanks to which he marches at the head of mankind the same as as he who, plunged into the shadows, cannot exit thence? This is how the miscreants see what they do through rosy colours[104]!" The commentators see herein an allegory and in the character in question they recognize Omar or anyone else. But if one has received from God a light, is it not Mohammed and is this light not the Qur'ân, designated by the same word in diverse places? "And thus we have sent thee a breath (emanating) of our decree; thou knowest not what were the book and the faith; but we have made thereof a light by which we lead how we wish of our servants, and thou, thou leadest upon a path straight[105]. Those who follow the Envoy, the Prophet ..... and those who have believed in him, have helped and succored him, and follow the light that has been revealed to him, those are the blessed[106]." Also Mohammed seems clearly designated in another verse of a similar tendency. "Be this he whose breast God has opened to the Islam and is upon a road of light come from his master[107]? Woe to those whose hearts are hardened to the mention of God; those are in an error self-evident[108]."

This is the Prophet whose breast God has opened to Islam. "Have we not made open thy breast[109]?" says God in a famous verse that legend has taken literally[110] but which, compared to that which I have cited, can only have a mystical significance. [111] The word breast is used by the

[104] 6:122.
[105] 42:52.
[106] 7:157b. Cf. 4:174, and 64:8, which speaks of the light which God has sent down (or revealed) which undoubtedly refers to the new faith.
[107] The suspension of the phrase is a figure of rhetoric rather common in the Koran. The idea implied is: Would you dare compare to other men (especially the infidels) he who, etc. See other examples in the same sura, verses 9 and 24; cf. 11:17; 13:33; 35:8; 43:18.
[108] 39:22.
[109] 94:1.
[110] See the traditional narrative in CAUSSIN DE PERCIVAL, *Essai*, I, 288.
[111] We meet twice again this term. Moses exclaimed: "Lord, open for me my chest!" (20:25). Elsewhere he says: "God, when he would lead someone, opens his breast to Islam" (6:125) - which, this time, can be applied

Arabs where we use the word "heart". Likewise, the Qur'ân says, the devil whispers in the *breasts* of men[112]; etc.

If my interpretation holds true, this is one of the favors granted to Mohammed by God as emblem: he was dead and he has been quickened. This is the seventh of those which, besides the Qur'ân (the light), have been conferred him. The six others are listed in two consecutive surahs (93 and 94) which I reproduce because they fall into the category of these exhortations to the patience which the present chapter handles specifically.

93. By the morning light – By the night when it is stillest, – Thy Lord has not forsaken thee nor does He hate thee. – The future life has better for thee than the present; – Verily thy Lord will give unto thee and thou wilt be content. – *Did he not find thee an orphan and give shelter – And did he not find thee wandering and guide – And did He not find thee destitute and enrich*. – … – So for the orphan be no tyrant, – … – So for the beggar be no miser – And for the grace of thy Lord be thou a reciter.

94. *Have we not for thee opened thy breast? – And we have eased from thee the burden – Which weighed down thy back – And we have exalted for thee thy renown*. – Verily with the hardship is a blessing. – So when thou has finished, get up – And to please thy Lord aspire!

In the first of these suras I left two empty brackets because I think the symmetry is broken, and I think there were four given favors and corresponding four exhortations:

1 Orphaned you have been sheltered – be not a tyrant for the orphan;

2. Errant you have been a guide [– … for the errant;]

3. Poor, you have been a rich man – be not stingy for the beggar;

indiscriminately to every Muslim. As this verse suggests it, the mystical sense answers to the idea of a repose, of a beatitude.

One generally interprets the word Islam by surrender; but in the Prophet's mind, I think it means: security. It is, moreover, more in line with the etymology.

[112] 114:5.

4. [.....] - this grace, tell it.

What is this wonderful grace, of which the Qur'ân, written after the Prophet, has not kept track? I do not wish to finish on an arbitrary hypothesis; but I believe that it contains a similar idea to that of the mystical death of Mohammed which seems to me recalled perfectly in the frame of the six metaphorical expressions highlit in the above two suras. I have already told how the opening of the breast was taken literally; I think it by the same naïveté of interpretation that the Prophet's historians have shown us orphan-then-recovered (by a parent), poor-then-enriched (by a marriage). No, it is God who has recovered him, it is God who has enriched him, as he opened his heart and directed his steps, and as he relieved him of his burden. Mystical aid, ideal opulence that has no contradiction with the idea of a new life which is the faith. The latter is a most simple allegory, which we find, for example, in this passage: "O ye who believe, respond to God and to the Prophet when he calls you to that which gives you life[113]." The commentators agree that this is the faith (or the Qur'ân, etc.); Nisabouri brings hither this expression frequent in the Qur'ân: "God brings forth the living from the dead"[114], which is equal for him to: "God makes a believer of the infidel." He brings here also this verse: "If someone does good, man or woman, and is a believer, verily we will make him live a delicious life; we will pay them their wages to the best of what they have done[115]." The comparison of the non-believer with the dead being in no way shocking, it is therefore very permissible that God had said to the Prophet: "Thou wert dead and I have made thee live!"

Taken also metaphorically, this new perspective of the Qur'ân on the Prophet's death is no longer in formal contradiction with the one I have first exposed and where it was only matter of

[113] 8:24.

[114] 3:27; 6:95; 10:31; 30:19. As this formula is accompanied by "and from the living brings forth the dead", I depart from Nichabouri, but I quote it to show how this allegorical interpretation is natural.

[115] 16:97. Here the allegory is not absolute because it concerns the life of paradise which, in the Qur'ân, is a life real and material.

bodily death. How far one could introduce it into some of the passages where we have accepted the literal interpretation, this is a question that I dare not address; allegorical exegesis is so difficult to reconcile with the demands of a serious critique! Perhaps one will reproach me already for having made too much of it.

V[116]

We have seen, above[117], that the Dajjâl or Antichrist had taught to Tamim ad-Dari many *malhamats*. What exactly does this word signify?

Ibn Khaldoun, in his Muqaddima, employed it with the meaning of "political prediction[118]." Silvestre de Sacy who, first, made note of this passage in his Chrestomathie arabe[119], said: "It appears, from the passage of Ibn Khaldun, the word malhamat, which signifies *a war* or *a bloody battle*, has been taken for a prediction that announced such events of this sort, then for any prediction about political revolutions[120]". But the learned Orientalist missed that these are not of any war, any political revolutions that Ibn Khaldun has in mind. The passage of this author that he translated relates to the Mahdi's coming and those to which the same author S. de Sacy alludes in its note 33 pertain likewise to this coming[121]. The latter, indeed, are not so explicit, and it seems, at first glance, that they speak only of the advent of new dynasties. It is the authors of such works, in prose and verse, as took the name of *malhamat* (plural: *malahim*) who prided themselves to know in advance all political events. Makrizi, from Ibn Dayat, speaks of an author of malhamats: *sahib al malahim*, who first knew that the new emir of Egypt Ahmed ibn Tulun

[116] The chapter that follows was published in the *Revue de l'histoire des religions* (March-April 1910) under the title: *La malhamat dans l'Islam primitif*; I reproduce it here with some modifications required by the plan adopted for this book.
[117] Page 29. [tr. 29]
[118] Tr. de Slane, II, [#3.52] 226 ff. [Rosenthal tr. 220f.]
[119] 2nd edition, II, 301-302.
[120] Ibid., p. 302.
[121] Ibid., p. 283.

had such a figure, such a stride, etc.[122] But this was only the consequence of that so-called science which should, in reality, embrace all the events that must elapse *up to the arrival of the Mahdi*. I have shown earlier from another Makrizi text[123] that the *malhamat* is itself an episode of this arrival of the Mahdi.

In this text where is told of Egypt's future destruction (before the end of the world), a number of destructions or ruins are announced in a given order. The ruin of the land of Kufa is followed by the malhamat, and by the conquest of Constantinople, then by the coming of the Dajjal. Such is the tradition passed by Kab al Ahbar and it is confirmed by that which Wahb ibn Munabbih gave where the malhamat is called the *great*. This last detail implies less important and earlier malhamats, and I am inclined to believe, without having positive proof, that these malhamats past are none other than the successive ruins which he has just mentioned, the great being the last of all and immediately preceding the coming of the Antichrist. This is evidently what he recounted to Tamim ad-Dari.

Ibn Khaldun believes that the traditions concerning the malhamats go back to those Jews of Yemen so suspect in his eyes, such as Kab al Ahbar, Wahb ibn Munabbih, Abd Allah ibn Salam, etc.[124]. Indeed, we see the first two cited by Makrizi; but, though these characters are rightly considered great fabricators of Muslim legends[125], on this point they do not seem to have been the first inventors. The tradition which dates back to Tamim ad-Dari seems to be truly independent of them.

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[122] *Description historique et topographique de l'Égypte* (in *Mémoires de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale*, III), p. 208.

[123] [Missing note]

[124] *Muqaddimah* [#6.10] de Slane tr. 2.461. [Rosenthal tr. 445]

[125] LIDBARSKI, *De propheticis quae dicuntur legendis arabicis*, pp. 37 and 44; CHAUVIN, *Recension égyptienne des Mille et une nuits*, p. 121; CLEMENT HUART, *Wahb ibn Monabbih* (*Journal asiatique*, 10 ° series, vol. IV, p. 331 et. sq.).

Hadji Khalfa[126] assigns a book (*kitab*) of *malahim* to Abu Daoud, the author of the famous collection of traditions entitled *kitab as sunan*. The indication of the famous bibliograph does not appear to be strictly accurate, since at least one of the chapters of *kitab as sunan* bears precisely that title, and it is unlikely that this chapter in origin had constituted a separate book. In the Cairo edition this chapter is preceded by that of the Mahdi and that of the *fitan* (plural *fitnat*, revolution). This last word is synonymous with malhamat because it means the revolutions which herald the end of the world. The chapter on the malahim has six and a half pages in-quarto [Ch. 39; now English tr. http://sunnah.com/abudawud/39] and relates many traditions on the end of the world. I summarise the principals [Eng. chs. 1589-90, 1592a]:

1. On the authority of Mouadh ibn Jabal[127] "... the ruin of Yathrib[128] [is] the onset of the malhamat; the onset of the malhamat [is] the conquest of Constantinople; the conquest of Constantinople is the onset of the Dajjaal." The Prophet, having said this, hit, by the hand, his interlocutor's thigh, saying: "This is true, as true as you are here".

2. On the authority of the same character: "The great malhamat, the conquest of Constantinople, the appearance of the Dajjaal in seven months;"

3. On the authority of Abd Allah ibn Bousr: "Between the malhamat and the conquest of Medina[129] six years, and the false messiah will appear in the seventh."

4. On the authority of Abu l-Darda, "the tent of the Muslims, on the day of the malhamat, [will be] in the Ghoûtat[130] near a city called Damascus, one of the best cities in Syria."

[126] Ed. and trans. Flügel, V, 157, No. 10521. Further on (VI, 102, No. 12841) the author intended to provide a study on the science of malahim. Flügel gives only the title and neglects, in the translation, to indicate that the intention has not been implemented.

[127] One of the most significant Companions, the most versed, on the testimony of the Prophet, in the science of the legal and illegal.

[128] Former name of Medina.

[129] Al Madinat; taken in an absolute sense, this word means the city, by extension: the City of the Prophet, Medina, equivalent to Yathrib of the first tradition.

This last passage seems to identify the day of the malhamat with the end of the world. As for that which precedes, if it be genuine, and if *al madinat* is to be translated as Medina, it is of utmost importance to show that the Prophet incessantly awaited the arrival of the false Messiah or Dajjal, as indeed the story of Tamim ad-Dari clearly suggests. It was later that Constantinople has been substituted for Medina, when taking that city represented in the eyes of the Muslims the ideal goal. The conquest of Medina would be the hegira which assured the Prophet possession of this city without firing a shot, and the malhamat corresponded to the Prophet's vocation. We note in passing the analogy of the septenary period with that of the six radjats (returns or centuries) that made of Mohammed somehow a seventh incarnation of Jesus Christ[131], with that of the seven millennia assigned by some traditionalists to the total life of the world, Mohammed appearing in the course of the seventh[132]; finally, with the famous ismaïli theory of the Prophets' cycle following seven by seven, the seventh having regularly a very special character: that of a reincarnation of the Divinity[133]. One wonders if the malhamat is not, at origin, precisely the sixth radjat, this sixth resurrection of Christ and consequently seventh incarnation. If this theory was indeed true, would it not give us the real sense, consistent with the etymology of the *malhamat*, since this word is formed from the root *lahm* "flesh"? The form malhamat is not appropriate, admittedly, to that which, derived from *lahm*, could relate to our term incarnation. In Arabic, this is usually rendered by *tadjassoud* derived from the root *djasad* "body". One would therefore say: "talahhoum" in the same sense, which takes us far away from: malhamat. But such forms mean "the act itself, the fact of the incarnation"; to designate the *time*, the *epoch* of the incarnation, the

[130] Name given by the Arabs to the plain of Damascus.
[131] See above, page 23 [tr. 23].
[132] MAKRIZI, *Description*, t. III, p. 17, from a tradition of Ibn Abbas, the Prophet's cousin. Cf. Ibn Khaldoun, *Muqaddimah* [#3.52] de Slane tr. 2.209. [Rosenthal tr. 204]
[133] Cf. DE GOËJE, *Les Carmathes du Bahrain*, 2nd edition, 166-169.

Arabic language will draw from the root *lahm* that which one names: a name of time or of place[134] which can only be *malham* or *malhamat*.

I do not hesitate to say that, even on this viewpoint, we can say that the original sense of the word malhamat was: incarnation. It would take a more decisive proof; in the meantime, what I just said can be considered only as a conjecture perhaps risky, perhaps able to be constrained later.

But what I think I can affirm is that, whatever its meaning, the primitive malhamat is an essential part of the doctrine of Mohammed. Thence came the name he gave himself of the *nabi-l malhamat* "prophet of the malhamat".

In the chapter by the historian Ibn Saad on the divers names of Mohammed, this is assigned him, on the authority of Abu Mousa al Achari, under that form, and, on the authority of Modjahid the equivalent form: *rasul al malhamat*. Tabari in his chronicle reproduces the first tradition[135]. The great traditionalist Muslim, in the list which he draws up, in his turn, does not provide it; but Nawawi, his commentator, signals briefly another tradition with the form *nabi-l malahim*. Arabic dictionaries, to the LHM root, mention that name and explain it in two ways: either by "prophet of combat" or by "prophet of the good order and of the reuniting of mankind". The first version is permissible in itself, but the second is very strange. To understand this it is vital to remember that the lexicographers explain the meaning of "combat" etymologically by: intermingling of the fleshes, that is to say of the bodies; this same sense therefore seems they agree to the reunion of mankind (into Islam). But it seems more rational to bring, for this sense, the Arabic *malhamat* of the Hebrew *milhamah* which actually means combat. As, in Hebrew, the

[134] S. DE SACY, *Grammaire arabe*, 2nd ed., I, 302.

[135] In my article from the *Revue de l'histoire des Religions*, I was wrong to give priority to Tabari, Ibn Saad being anterior by a century.

root LHM pertains no more to "flesh", but to "bread", the Arabs' etymology has no more basis. From all fashions, the lexicographers' hesitation between two very contradictory versions show that they did not understand and that the word has here a special mystical meaning.

This mystical or rather apocalyptic meaning has been glimpsed by Mr. Goldziher a first time in his remarkable study on the Shiite literature[136]. Meanwhile M. Steinschneider had published an article on the various apocalypses where the Arabic malhamat is well understood[137]. Mr. Goldziher has had, later, occasion to mention the word anew, but seems not to have thought to use the article by Steinschneider[138]. It is the same for Van Vloten[139] who has only touched on the truth by noting that, in addition to the meaning of "melee, combat," the word "is used in the metaphorical sense of grave and fateful doom that could not be avoided". Since none of these authors had used the traditions on malhamat collected by Abu Daoud and Makrizi[140], the eschatological character of the malhamat has eluded them[141].

Mohammed being dead, it became necessary to accept a malhamat without his participation; but the first Muslims did not rest less convinced that this malhamat was going to appear from one day to the next. It must have been, above all, their main concern, and it was not, it seems, until the end of the first century of Hijra that one began to abandon the chimeric study of the Malahim. This is the meaning of a curious passage from the Egyptian historian Ibn Yunus reproduced by his successors, Makrizi, Abu'l Mahasin, Suyuti, etc., and, before them, by

[136] *Beiträge zur Literaturgeshichte der Šî'â*, Vienna, 1874, p. 54.

[137] *Apocalypsen mit polemischer Tendenz* in *Zeitsch. der deutsch. morgenl. Ges*., XXVIII, Leipzig, 1874, pp. 627-659; see especially pp. 628, 629, 650, 652.

[138] *Muhammadanische Studien*, Halle, 1890, II [#2.7], 73; [#3.9], 127 [Stern tr. *Muslim Studies* (Unwin, 1971), 77, 122].

[139] *Recherches sur la domination arabe*, etc., Amsterdam, 1894, p. 57.

[140] Only Mr. Goldziher has made thereto a brief allusion, *Muh. St*., II, 127 [Stern tr. 122-3].

[141] I must say that Sprenger has had this sentiment in *Leben and Lehre*, III, 219 (the index wrongfully bears, 319), note 1. "Es ist ein hebräischies Wort, welches in Weissagungen oder, wenn vom Antichrist die Rede ist, gebraucht wird."

Nawawi in his learned commentary on Muslim. It is from the latter that Mr. Goldziher has, first, made known this text[142]. I summarize it thus: Yazid ibn Abu Habib (died 128 AH) was the first who worked with true science in Egypt; before him, one worked only with malhamats and fitnats.

If any doubt could still be had, the indication of the fitnats will disperse it. Indeed, as we have already noted, this word which usually has the sense of "disorder, sedition" means, when it is taken in an absolute sense, the tribulations which must precede the coming of the Mahdi. It is in this sense that it is understood by Abu Dawud in the chapter of fitnats, *kitab al fitan*, of which we have spoken above. It follows that before Yazid ibn Abu Habib, the only subject of study was the science of malhamats, fitnats, etc., that is to say of the symptoms of the end of the world. Van Vloten has clearly shown how this issue in the early days of Islam preoccupied all minds[143]. "The time of trouble that rabbinic theology means by the words *Kheblê ham-machîakh* (birth pangs of the Messiah) is labeled *hardj* by the Arabs. This word usually means a tumult, riot ... We could see traces of this expectation of *hardj* in the words of Zobair (when at Basra the people refused to join him against Ali)[144] "This is the sedition (*fitna*) of which one has told us."

Van Vloten then quotes, from Ibn Saad, a curious story. At one point in very deep trouble a venerable sheikh exclaims: I would give much that sedition expire! ... To a man having asked him: What do you fear? it is a tumult at most, he responded: I fear *al hardj*. - And what is *al hardj*? - So spoke the Companions of the Prophet, the killing (*al qatl*) which will precede the supreme "Hour" (the last judgment), when men will not live in peace under any imâm. And by Allah if this comes, I shall be on the top of a mountain, where I shall hear neither the sound of

[142] In both passages of *Muh. St.,* indicated above.
[143] *Recherches sur la domination arabe*, p. 57 et seq.
[144] In 36 AH, the beginning of Ali's caliphate.

your voice, nor the cry of your call, until the arrival of he who called my father (the angel of judgment)."

The same author also shows us the anticipation of the Dajjal haunting peoples' minds in the days of the Prophet and after his death[145].

Thus, under various forms *fitnat*, *hardj*, etc., we always find preoccupation with the malhamat. Thus we come to a quite natural explanation of the sense which that word later took. A treatise on *malhamats*[146] in prose or verse is simply a treatise on the warning signs of the end of the world, that is to say immediately before the appearance of the Dajjaal, the Mahdi, and finally the Messiah. Thus malhamats are future events but with the nuance that they relate to the end of the world[147].

The identity of "end of the world" and of "malhamat" seeming to me beyond doubt, it must be concluded that the name granted Mohammed of *nabi-l malhamat* means properly "prophet of the end of the world". This prophet who was to prepare the coming of the Messiah, Jews and Christians accepted him[148] and Muhammad did not forgive their position of not recognising him by it. We have this avowal from a commentator of the Qur'ân highly prized by Orientals: Nisabouri. Commenting on sura *lam iakoun*[149] where the Prophet bemoans at the people of the Scripture their determination to close eyes to the evidence and declares them more detestable than pagans, he explains that the people of the Scripture recognized *the prophet of the end of the world* and that Muhammad having done naught but confirm their Prophet and their book, it was

[145] Op. cit., p. 59 ff.
[146] *Kitab al malahim*, see above, pp. 45-46. [tr. 45]
[147] See AL BIRUNI (tr. Sachau, p. 19): "... the Mahdi… he of whom it says in the *kitab al malahim* that he shall fill the world with justice, etc."
[148] Generally it is Elijah who will live again and that must reappear to that effect; cf. Malachi, IV, 5. It can also be any prophet. So that at the appearance of John the Baptist, he was asked: "Are you Elijah or the prophet? "(Ev. St. John, I, 21). According to St. Matthew (XI, 14) Jesus says that John the Baptist "is Elijah who was to come."
[149] The 98th also called: al bayyinat "the evidence".

unacceptable that they be his enemies. The word used by Nisabouri to "confirm" is quite vague and it is apparent that the idea is somewhat shrouded, but the positive direction is that Mohammed is none other than this prophet of the end of the world. By "confirm" means: "to establish the authenticity of". However Mohammed being prophet could not establish the authenticity of the prophet recognized by the Jews and Christians except by his own vocation. Does one say that one need translate: "to recognize (in the Qur'ân or Sunnat) that such a prophet should appear"? But he will be evidently identical with Mohammed whom the Qur'ân declares the seal, that is to say, the last of the prophets! However we examine the commentator's phrase, it cannot have other than this meaning: the Prophet foretold by the people of Scripture to prepare at the end of the world the Messiah's coming is *realised* by Muhammad. It is he who is the prophet of the end of the world, the prophet of the malhamat.

But this prophet once dead, it became necessary to replace him. This is why, despite the axiom posed by Mohammed: "There is no prophet after me," Muslims were brought to the concept of the mahdi who is none other than the same extension of Mohammed as prophet of the malhamat or predecessor of the Messiah. It is the origin and development of this new concept which goes to make up the subject of the next chapter.

VI

Of the authors who have written about Mahdism, the one that had, in my opinion, the fairest viewpoint is of Herbelot when, in his *Bibliothèque orientale*, at the article Mohammed Aboulcassem (twelfth Imam and Mahdi), after expounding on the Mahdi doctrine among the supporters of the twelve Imams[150], he adds: "This fable is apparently taken from a tradition that is common to Jews and to Christians, that when Elijah returns to life he must, at the end of the ages, appear in the world to prepare the way for the Messiah, and to precede the judgment of all men that the Muslims believe, as well as Christians, must be enacted by Jesus Christ, against the sentiment of the Jews."

In my turn, I say: the mahdi is none other than the prophet of the end of the world recognized by the *people of the Scripture*, as Nichabouri says, and whom Mohammed was to realise. He is none other than the prophet of the malhamat who was to be Muhammad. He is none, in a word, but Muhammad surviving as himself under another form and fulfilling his messianic task.

Were it not so, the mahdism which is the essence of Islam would contradict itself, since, as we have said, it goes against Muhammad's fundamental doctrine: "There is no prophet after me". This contradiction has justly struck Mr. Blochet who, in a memoir entitled Le Messianisme dans heterodoxie musulmane[151] returned there repeatedly and concluded that by adopting Mahdism, Shiism deviates from the true Islamic religion: "The fundamental dogma of the Shi'ite

[150] The concept of mahdi presents itself under two distinct forms: 1. that of the mahdi isolated and appearing only with the end of the world; 2. that of the mahdi who, completing a series of imams (series of seven, twelve, etc.), has appeared for the first time, then has disappeared and must reappear at the end of the world.

[151] Paris, Maisonneuve, 1903.

heterodoxy, which makes those who profess it to have in reality no right to claim themselves Muslims, is the belief that a prophetic mission may exist after that of Mohammed[152]" and further: "The Shiites' doctrine, after which may exist one or more other prophets after Mohammed, implies the idea that his mission will be *abrogated* by the new divine envoys and that the Qur'ân will also be *abrogated* by other books[153]". This viewpoint is, actually, that which should halt anyone who sees in Mahdism a heresy, some reaction against Islam. That is why Sunnism, without absolutely rejecting[154] this doctrine which seems based upon very important traditions, holds it at bay. It remains no less deeply rooted in the popular mind, as evidenced by the revolutions it raises from time to time, in the midst of Muslim populations even the most orthodox.

But for those who believe, instead, that the primitive Shiism (before its exaggerations and its revolutionary visions) is the true Muslim orthodoxy, the viewpoint necessarily differs. Mahdism is not, in Islam, an anomaly, but a simple compromise which the Umayyads once masters of power have sought to annul, that the Abbasids revived, by exploiting it, then that political necessities have postponed anew beyond the official orthodoxy. The opposition seized on it and, having become a partisan instrument, the doctrine has necessarily changed and distorted. These changes and these multiple distortions are most interesting to study for the history of the human spirit, but this is not our subject here. It is the primitive doctrine and in its original purity that we have to clarify. We have mostly to demonstrate that it derives, directly and without the intervention of any foreign philosophical or religious corruption, from Mohammed's teaching.

[152] Op. cit., 141.
[153] Ibid., 142.
[154] Some doctors only postpone it. See IBN KHALDUN, *Muqaddimah* [#3.51], de Slane tr. 2.188 [Rosenthal tr. 184]; the author, a most decided sunnite, does not seem personally to add here great faith.

In a study on the latest mahdi who, thirty years hence, appeared in Sudan and strongly attracted the attention of Europe, Darmesteter, with his particular competence, has shown mainly the Persian form of Mahdism. He has been able to address the most distant origins; but he has nevertheless unraveled the true nature and has stated it in a happy formula: "Strauss claims that the figure of Jesus is a projection launched by the popular imagination at the font of Israel's old prophecies: the life of the Mahdi is the Strauss theory in action; Mahdi is the living reflection of Mohammed"[155]. In his turn, M. Snouck Hurgronje has undertaken to explain to the European public that curious figure. However, for all that Hurgronje first treats Darmesteter's article with some disdain and that he approaches the subject with a more special and cautious competence, he seems to me to have had a less clear view of the problem.[156] There is though a moment when the learned Dutch orientalist, so aware of matters of Islam, skimmed, so to speak, the solution when he shows that the concept of the Mahdi is not *contemporary* with the Prophet. "He (Muhammad) has always believed the end of the world close enough, so that in the oldest tradition we can count Mohammed's coming itself among the signs of the approach of the end of the world. As long as the Prophet was alive, his entourage thought so little of the possibility of his death that his father-in-law and first successor (Abu Bakr) had great difficulty convincing the faithful that Muhammad was truly dead[157]." The conclusion that Mr. Snouck Hurgronje has left open is the same argument that I develop. Mohammed, necessary to the end of the world, having died, it became necessary to revive him owing to that very necessity.

[155] *Le mahdi, depuis les origines de l'Islam jusqu'à nos jours* (Association scientifique de France; bulletin hebdomadaire, 22 and 29 March 1885, extract), pp. 22-23.

[156] *Der Mahdi* (Revue coloniale internationale, II, No. I. January 1886, pp. 25-69).

[157] Loc. cit., p. 26: "Endlich hat er das Weltende doch immer ziemlich nabe geglaubt, sodass man in der älteren Tradition sogar die Sendung Muhammeds selbst zu den Vorzeichen des nahenden Weltendes zählen konnte. So lange der Prophet noch am Leben war, dachte man in seiner Gemeinde so wenig an die Möglichkeit seines Todes, dass es bekanntlich nachher seinem Schwiegervater und erstem Nachfolger recht schwierig wurde, die Glaübigen davon zu überzeugen dass Muhammed wirklich gestorben sei."

Thence was born the doctrine of return: *radjat*, which is the indisputable origin of Mahdism.

This was, as we have seen, the first cry of Omar, one of the most fervent Muslims, one of the most cautious to the Prophet's mind. "No, he is not dead; like Moses or Jesus, he is with his Lord, he will *revisit* us[158]." And such was, throughout the history of Islam, the cry repeated by degrees like an infinite echo[159]. Mohammed dead and is not returning, one thought to Ali to replace him as having been his legatee. Ali dead, one cried that he would return. As he did not return, one wanted to find Mohammed in a new Mohammed Ali's son. Him dead in his turn, his supporters affirmed that he would return, and this process has recurred at will in Islam.

Uno avulso non deficit alter.

It is during the application of the process to the son of Ali that the word Mahdi appears, it seems, for the first time in Arabic with a mystical sense that I translate properly by: reincarnation of Mohammed. As we know it, the similarity of name is one of the essential elements.

After Abu Bakr's affirmation that Muhammad was dead, Omar seems, so say the Muslim historians, to have renounced his hope. But others picked up that hope and made it a weapon against the new state of affairs. I do not examine here whether the general reaction which followed the death of the Prophet and which reaction his very able successor, Abu Bakr, drowned in blood was not at least in large part due to the disillusioned belief in the Prophet's return. We do not have sufficient data to determine these events' true causes, and, despite some positive signs toward this viewpoint, I can say only one thing, which is that such a reaction was

[158] See above, page 19. [tr. 19]

[159] This cry contains so well in germ the whole theory of Mahdism that one Shiite author wishing to legitimize the ghaibat (temporary disappearance) of the Mahdi, the Twelfth Imam, recalls first of all Omar's attitude on this occasion. IBN BABOUYEH in E. MÖLLER, *Beiträge zur Mahdilehre des Islams*, p. xx; text, p. 31.

bound to happen if the Prophet's death were truly inconsistent with the doctrine itself. It is explained thereby in full, and perhaps much less by other considerations.

I pass immediately to the time of Othman, third successor of Muhammad, with whom the Meccan aristocracy of the Umayyads, once humiliated and defeated by Muhammad and his companions, now gained the upper-hand and began to realize his dream of universal domination of the Arab people. Othman's party was the party of the Prophet's worst enemies, the men most foreign to the true Muslims' naive beliefs, and for whom the end of the world, the rewards and punishments of the next life, held infinitely less importance than the conquest of temporal goods that the new religion assured to its leaders. To feast upon riches, to conquer for pillage, and to dominate for booty, such is the undeniable Umayyad psychology, and one is surprised to see a Catholic priest, as the scholar Padre Lammens, defend these brazen skeptics and mock the naivety of Ali eternally duped by them[160]. I will not go so far to say that this exaggerated Christian tenderness is the same condemnation of the Umayyads as the Muslim opinion, because it suits me no further to appoint myself as Ali's defender and admirer. But it is certain that Ali represented only at that moment the pure spirit of Islam and it does not matter to us, at the standpoint where we must place ourselves here, that this pure spirit of Islam would have posed a serious threat for Christendom's existence, even for civilization. We have neither to lament the defeat of Ali and ofhis supporters, nor to rejoice therein. What interests us above all is whether the party of Ali was, or not, the true custodian of the Prophet's doctrine.

[160] *Études sur le règne du Calife Omaiyade Mo'awia I* (*Mélanges de la faculté orientale de Beyrouth*), II, 36-39; 169-172. Nothing more pungent than these studies where the author, admirably versed in the history of that time, impassioned for or against the characters, where advocacies and indictments follow each other at will. The conclusion indicates the spirit: "And this is how, instead of being hailed as the main supporters of Mahomet's religion, the caliphs of Damascus bear in Muslim history the withering stigma of [enemies of religion]!" We do not share this surprise and firmly believe that Muslims of old were the best judges on this point.

Under Othman's caliphate, at a time that still remains to be determined, a man pronounced this saying: "Is it not strange that Muslims accept the return, *radjat*, of Jesus Christ and that those same Muslims deny the return of Mohammed[161]?" Curious argument that repeated the same idea expressed by Omar. This character, a Yemeni Jewish convert, they say, was called Abd Allah ibn Saba and Muslim historians consider him the creator of Shiism. Besides this comment, they impute to him others that I will examine successively.

We can add alongside this Abd Allah: "since the return of Jesus as the Messiah, an essential tenet of Islam, was closely linked to the mission of Muhammad; since Muhammad was the Prophet (recognized by the Jews and Christians) to prepare the roads for the Messiah: how could the Muslims conceive *the return of Jesus not preceded by the return of Mohammed*?" Logically sincere believers had to maintain a prophet of the end of the world and to resurrect Mohammed at the appointed time, because it could be no other prophet than he. Thus the doctrine of Mahdism, although not yet spoken, is well contained in this remark, is its immediate consequence. However, as I said, the word mahdi is not yet pronounced, barring that one recognize as authentic those traditions attributed to Muhammad on the Mahdi. But these traditions contradict all the evidence we have collected of a close connection between Mohammed and the end of the world, they render impossible the general error of the most intimate Companions of the Prophet on his death's impossibility. To admit that the Prophet had

[161] DOZY, *Essai sur l'histoire de l'islamisme*, pp. 221-222. Cf. FRIEDLANDER, *The heterodoxies of the Shiites* (*Journal of the American Oriental Society*, XXIX, 1909) p. 24. The study of this scholar on the radjat is very interesting; it tries to attach it to the Christian heresy of Docetism. This, indeed, like the Qur'ân, states that Jesus was not crucified, that another has been in his place; but does it contain the idea of Jesus' return? This is what does not appear (ibid., p. 29). Mr. Wellhausen decides the issue by stating that the parallel between the return of Mohammed and Jesus is a mistake, Misversländnis, because, he says, Mohammed does not come back on the last Judgment (*Die religös-politischen Oppositions-parteien*, p. 93, note 2 [RC Ostle & SM Walzer tr. *The Religio-Political Factions in Early Islam* (Amsterdam-Oxford: 1975)]). I do not see the mistake. Ibn Saba, like Omar, was perfectly logical; it is not their fault if the Muslims have renounced, later, over this consequence, or rather have substituted over Mohammed this mystical form: the mahdi.

spoken of what would happen after his own death, is at the same time to admit that these words, as well as the Qur'ân verses recited afterwards by Abu Bakr, were absolutely unknown to the Companions. And it is these same companions who serve as authority for all the traditions! There is here an incompatibility, to speak plainly: an obvious absurdity. The authenticity of such traditions would imply ignorance or bad faith of the author and destroy thereby itself[162].

A second relevant statement no less suggestive, is attributed to Abd Allah ibn Saba; but, while all the historians ascribe it to him concurrently with the first, I believe, on the contrary, it represents a significant modification (starting a new stage) of his thought. It is thus reported: "Every prophet has an agent or legatee; that of Mohammed was Ali. So it is a crime of infidelity to obey another as the legatee of Mohammed[163]."

That is why his supporters fought, over a viewpoint wholly religious, the caliphate of Othman. Once the propaganda had spread, a conspiracy was formed that brought about the assassination of the caliph and the appointment of Ali as his successor.

This concept wholly new and which tends to give in post-mohammedan Islam, so to speak, a preeminent place to Ali, is clearly distinct from the original. It is no longer about the end of the world; it is about the rational organization of Islam until the end of the world. Thus reduced, it represents a doctrine more political than religious: it opposes the idea of prophetic right monarchy (which will quickly become *divine* right) to the idea of *aristocratic* right monarchy, as claimed by the practical Umayyads. It should not go so far to say, with Mr Wellhausen, that the party, the *chiat* Ali was originally purely political and without religious element[164]. This would

[162] One finds in Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah* [#3.51] de Slane tr. 2.153-189, a very close criticism of these traditions. We have already noticed his skepticism (above, page 55, note 4). [tr. 55 n. 154]

[163] S. DE SACY, *Exposé de la religion des Druzes*, XIV; CHAHRASTANI (tr.), I, 200 [Kazi tr. 150]; FRIEDLANDER, *The heterodoxies of the Shiites*, I, 37; II, 18; DOZY, *Essai sur l'hist. de l'islamisme*, p. 222.

[164] "Die Schiat Ali war ursprünglich eine politische Partei und keine religöse Sekte". *Prolegomena zur ältesten Geschichte des Islams* (*Skizzen und Vorarbeiten*, VI), p. 125.

misunderstand deeply the pious fury that true Muslims should feel against the return to power of those they had fought so hard[165]. But it is undeniable that, standing on the ground of reality, so of politics, one opposed party to party. That is how Islam split into *Alides* and *Othmanides*.

No more than the Alides, did the Othmanides confine themselves only to the political question. Mr. Goldziher[166] was the first to show the significance of this second term that is, somehow the mystical form of the term most commonly used of: Umayyad applied to the party contrary to Ali. Van Vloten[167] and then Fr. Lammens[168] have completed the views of Mr. Goldziher in showing that this term applied even to people in no way dedicated to Othman or to the Umayyads but neutral in the quarrel between the former and Ali. In fact whoso says: *Othmanide* at that time says positively: *anti-Alide*. This is one of those deep divisions which flash in the history of peoples and survive longterm into quarrels that were the origin, like that of the Guelphs and Ghibellines. Later, the Othmanides representing the Arab race, the Alides are mainly recruited among the Persians, but Iranian influence applies only to later forms of *Alism* or to Shiism itself. A singular assertion is that of Mr. Wellhausen, who denies the political action of Abd Allah ibn Saba because one attributed a propagandum to him by secret correspondence, process unknown, says the German scholar, at this time and which was only used later by the Persians for Abbasid propaganda[169]. As if the monopoly of such propaganda could be claimed for one party, one time, to the exclusion of the others! But we must recognize that the principle of this criticism is fair: the properly Persian elements must be distanced from the origins of Shiism. Alides and Othmanides represent the opposition of two purely Arab parties, of two

[165] Dozy, better informed student of Arab matters, has cast light upon this in the early chapters of his history of the Muslims in Spain (III-V) [tr. Francis Griffin Stokes (London: Chatto & Windus, 1913)].
[166] *Muhammedanische Studien*, II [#3.8], p. 119 ff. [Stern tr. 115f]
[167] *Recherches sur la domination arabe*, p. 36, note 3.
[168] P. LAMMENS, *Mélanges de la Faculté orientale de Beyrouth*, II, pp. 11, 17.
[169] *Prolegomena zur ältesten Geschichte des Islams* (*Skizzen and Vorarbeiten*, VI), p. 124.

families, nay, of two branches of the same family. These are the descendants of Abd Manaf who are divided into Umayyads and Hashimites [170] and the Hashimites stood against the Umayyads only as immediate parents and custodians of the Prophet's intent.

To this the Umayyads or Othmanides responded: 1. that by the practice from time immemorial among the Arabs, the head of the family being the head of the elder branch, Mohammed's parentage conferred the power only upon the line of Abd Shams (father to Omeyyat) eldest brother of Hashim; 2. that Othman, the rightly-appointed caliph, was as qualified as any other. Othman's martyrdom gave him even a veritable mystic aura and one of the Othmanides went as far to compare him to Christ[171]. The cult rendered to his memory took even the name of religion, *din*[172], and, in accusing Ali of being complicit in the crime, the Umayyads gave themselves the role of avengers and judges. Ali, surpassed by their more or less sincere claims, was weak enough to want to justify himself in the eyes of his cynical adversaries. He committed the supreme fault; many of his most devoted followers, puritans of Islam, considered this condescension of infidelity, and the unfortunate caliph had against him, not half, but two thirds of the Muslim world. Still, it took the dagger to put an end to this man as valiant on the battlefield as timid in the field of politics and diplomacy[173].

Abd Allah ibn Saba, having learned his death, reacted like Omar speaking of Mohammed, that it was not so, that Ali would return. This is the third comment attributed to Abd Allah and which

[170] P. LAMMENS, *Mél. Fac. orient. de Beyrouth*, II, pp. 46, 51.

[171] GOLDZIHER, *Muh. Studien*, II [#3.8], 120 [Stern tr. 116], seems to present this comparison as common. But the text he cites gives that only as a quip by the famous al Ḥadjdjādj, quip which was anyway badly received.

[172] GOLDZIHER, id., ibid.

[173] I recall in passing the historical facts to which I refer. In 35 AH the caliph Othman of the Umayyad family is assassinated for having too favored his family members and their supporters. Ali is hailed caliph by the people of Medina; a first group of dissidents is defeated by him at the so-called Battle of the Camel. The Umayyad family declares his appointment null and void: it comes to blows at Siffin (37). The Umayyads, almost beaten, request arbitration to decide on Ali's legitimacy. To this he consents: the referees depose it. He refuses to accept the sentence. Meanwhile, Kharijites declare Ali, for having accepted their arbitration, to be as guilty as the Umayyads, and take up arms against him. There ensues a great slaughter in Nahrawan (38). One of these fanatics assassinates him (40). For details, see WEIL, *Geschichte der Chalifen*, I, 191-260.

has been questioned because one finds that only among the later historians. That he is not the author, it is possible; but there were others, to be sure, to reach the logical conclusion, and they are called Sabaites (partisans of Ibn Saba) wrong or right. Per their doctrine, Ali lives on in the clouds; the lightning is his whip, the thunder is his voice, he will return at the known Hour to restore upon the earth justice and universal happiness[174].

The definitive form took shape after the death of Ali, of Hasan and Housein, his two sons. To Abd Allah ibn Saba succeeded the Mukhtar; to the *Sabaites* the *Keisanites*. For them the Mahdi is the third son of Ali, whose mother was called the Hanafiyat. If he did not descend from the Prophet, like his brothers Hasan and Housein, nonetheless he bore the name, even the name (*kouniat*). According to a tradition rejected by Sounnites, the Prophet had said to Ali: "thou wilt have a son to whom thou shalt grant my name and my surname[175]." From that moment, the real Mahdi must bear the name and surname [176] of the Prophet and likewise, per some, the Mahdi's father must bear the name of Muhammad's father: AbdAllah. This second characteristic appears to be a later invention, perhaps to combat the son of Ali and of the Hanafiyat. For the *Twelvers* (partisans of the twelfth Imam Mahdi) this condition does not exist; their awaited imam is called Abu al Qasim Mohammed son of Hasan.

[174] See S. DE SACY, *Religion des Druzes*. Introduction, p. xiv; Van Vloten, *Recherches sur la domination arabe*, p. 41; DOZY, *Essai sur l'hist. de l'islamisme*, pp. 222-223.

[175] The name or kouniat consists essentially of the word Abu "father" more rarely akhoû "brother" followed by a proper or common name. Here this is Abu'l Kasim. This feature proves that the idea of fatherhood is not necessarily contained in the kouniat, error too common in even the most learned Orientalists. If ever an Arab applies a kouniat to the name of one or the other of his sons, more generally kouniat is given to the holder at the same time as the name, at birth.

[176] The connection between the first and last name, though not an absolute rule, is very frequent. Even in some countries now, it is rigorous.

The Mukhtar's story, of Mohammed son of the Hanafiyat, of the Keisanites, etc., is well known. It is not in my scope to dwell on it[177], as I have said before, still less to continue the evolution of the *radjat* I mentioned at the start of this chapter. If even I followed it up to there, it is only to note the appearance of the first character authentically recognized as mahdi and, thence, to try to draw some clarification on the precise meaning of that word.

Masoudi recounts to us of the poet Kouthayyir a verse which, if authentic, gives, I think, the earliest mention[178]. This poet was Keisanite, and, speaking of this Muhammad son of Ali, he says:

This is the Mahdi of whom has taught us Kab, the man of narratives on the past times.

He is the last of the four imams and he is not dead, he lives hidden in the Radwa valley, by Mecca; his supporters are eagerly awaiting his return[179].

The doctrine of Mahdism appears thus closely linked to that of the Imamate and I think that the two words mahdi and imam are, in origin, identical, or at least complementary to each other[180].

In the Qur'ân, the word imam appears a number of times with quite distinct meanings; the most common is that of "inspired leader, appointed by God," and as close as possible to "prophet." In one of those passages (17:71), it is said that at the last judgment every people will be there with his imam and that believers (as distinct from others) will receive their book in the

[177] Consult DOZY, *Essai sur l'histoire de l'islamisme*, 223-225; Van Gelder, *Mohtar de valsche Profeet*; Wellhausen, *Oppositions-parteien*, 74-95 [Ostle & Walzer tr.]. On Keisanites see Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah* [3#25] de Slane tr. 1.406; Chahrastani (tr.), I. 165-174. [Kazi tr. 126-131]

[178] *Prairies d'or*, V, 181.

[179] Ibid., 182-183.

[180] In the words of an earlier historian of Muslim sects, Abd al Kahir al Baghdadi, the partisans of Abd Allah ibn Saba have already appointed Ali as the awaited Mahdi. This testimony is isolated and I cannot guarantee its accuracy. He would come to support my theory on the identity of imam and mahdi.

right hand. It is clear that, this time, Muhammad is referred to by the name imam, because all agree that Muhammad will gather his people at the supreme day[181] and he will be their representative before God[182]. It follows that the mahdi, if he is, too, an imam, will do at the last Judgment which he precedes and announces, double duty with Mohammed himself. This point is not made clear in what we know of Muslim eschatology; the role of the Mahdi at the last moment is completely ignored and having been in the foreground, near the beginning, it seems to vanish. On the contrary, the Prophet who at first seems lost in the crowd of revived men gradually takes primary place[183]. Muslims are not therefore embarrassed by those two imams; Mohammed having returned, a mahdi is no longer necessary.

In two other passages in the Qur'ân it is said that the prophets are imams who lead *a'imatan iahdoûna*[184]. However it is the verb *hadâ* "guide" that derives the word mahdi. At first glance, it seems it should mean "one who leads" and the first Orientalists, in this thought, pronounced: *mouhdi* which indeed has this sense. But there can be no doubt: the Arabs see it as the past participle of the first form and pronounce: mahdiy[185]. In the verse we quoted above, the metre requires imperatively that pronunciation. It must therefore be understood: "the one who is led (by God)".

[181] From at one of his names: al hachir "one who brings." See page 18. [tr. 18]

[182] Ibn Khaldoun, *Muqaddimah* [#1.6], de Slane tr. 1.194 [Rosenthal tr. / ed. Dawood, 74]. "I hope", says Mohammed, "to have the greatest number of followers on the day of resurrection" - Cf. Q. 2:143 (above, page 19, note 1). [tr. 19 n. 32]

[183] See, for example, in Ghazali, *la Perle précieuse* (edited and translated by L. Gautier), pp. [62-78;] 53-66 of the translation. [Jane Idleman Smith tr. *The Precious Pearl* (Missoula: 1979), 58-68.]

[184] Q. 21:73; 32:24.

[185] The normal form would be: Mahdoûy, but according to the laws governing the Arabic sounds û and î, the first is here replaced by the second. Mouhdi is the present participle of the same verb in the fourth form. In the first form, the present participle is hâdi which is actually one of the names assigned to the mahdi.

Still, it seems very strange to me that the Mahdi-Imam must be *led* while the imam leads. Without discussing the exact meaning of the word imam[186], without insisting on the name of imam given to the driver of the caravan, it is positive that when the word appears after the Qur'ân, it involves the idea of direction given and not received. The famous poet al Farazdak (20-110h.) speaking of an Umayyad Caliph called him: *the imam whereby hearts are conducted*[187]. Moreover, it is understood that the imam leads only because God leads, as it is, at the same time, khalifat Allah "Vicar of God." It is more rational to give to the imam the epithet of mouhdi "director". This would provide a very simple explanation of the word itself. But as it has against it the unanimity of the authors and that I can give no positive evidence in its favor, I do this only as a personal interpretation.

The intimate union of the words imam and mahdi is also attested by the curious fact that the first caliph who, on his currency, is given the title of imam, is precisely the one who bore the nickname Mahdi[188]. He was not even yet caliph, but only heir apparent. Besides if he was awarded the surname of Mahdi; it is that he was called Muhammad ibn Abd Allah and that more likely his father (the Caliph Abd Allah al Mansour) wanted to oppose him to a descendant of Ali which was called, too, Muhammad ibn Abd Allah and proclaimed mahdi[189].

Ultimately, I believe the Mahdi is the strict equivalent of Imam and that in principle any imam is mahdi[190]. Perhaps, continuing the story of Mahdism, we should find other more explicit clues of that identity. But I have already said it would be out of my topic which is properly the

[186] Mr. van Berchem has given a rapid sketch in the *Journal asiatique* (March-April, 1907), 10th series, vol. IX, p. 260 (reprint, 20), note 1.

[187] *Divan* (ed. and tr. Boucher), p. 28 of the translation.

[188] And not Mamoun, as says Mr. Van Berchem, op. cit., ibid. See TIESENHAUSEN, *Monnaies des khalifes orientaux*, no. 802. It is on a bronze coin, minted in Bokhara in 151 AH, very common. The Bibliothèque nationale possesses three copies (Catalogue LAVOIX, *Khalifes orientaux*, nos. 1554, 1555, and one non-catalogued).

[189] On this character, called "the pure soul", see IBN AL TIQTAQA, *al-Fakhri*, (translated by E. Amar in *Archives Marocaines*, Vol. XVI), pp. 268-273. He was killed in 145 AH.

[190] On the word's significance, see an important note by Mr. Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den Islam*, p. 267 (12).

doctrine of Mohammed about the end of the world; and having examined it in its first consequences and afterward, I think it is time to conclude.

VII

My conclusion is therefore that the Qur'ân, like the books of *malahim*[191] which are its natural continuation, is an apocalypse, at least throughout its first-revealed part (the non-legalistic part). It is a revelation about the end of the world; 'tis the cry so often issued since Christianity gave life to the Messiah: "The times are overturned." Even in this era of profound skepticism, do we not see bloom, here and there, mystical sects founded on the fateful belief? Is it not this same belief which was the dream of Christopher Columbus and which brought out a reality so unexpected[192]?

What makes the originality of the Qur'ânic apocalypse, is that it gives to Mohammed the character of the expected Prophet, the Prophet foretold in the Old and New Testament. This doctrine, we will find nowhere else in a form this precise; indicated rather vaguely by ancient Hebrew prophets and by the Gospel, it had to wander silently in one of the innumerable sects of the Orient and it is not impossible that it was taught by monks to this mystical Bedouin. In this respect, the Muslim traditions, which I have briefly recalled in section III, accurate or not in the details, seem to me a mirror of the reality.

The Muslim doctrine on the end of the world, as it is presented to us, is essentially Christian: various appalling signs announce it; the Antichrist appears, then Jesus the Messiah returns to

[191] See above, p. 45 et seq. [tr 45f]

[192] See the *Grande Encyclopédie* to article Colombo, the excellent monograph of Mr. André Berthelot (Vol. XI, p. 1039, col. 2).

earth; then God proceeds to the Judgment[193]. In this rhapsody, one important detail is introduced by Islam: the mahdi. None of these elements is explicitly mentioned in the Qur'ân[194]. By contrast, the tradition is very precise about that. It is there, in my opinion, a phenomenon of the strangest. I have given here the explanation for the mahdi. But for the Antichrist and for the return of Jesus, the silence of the Qur'ân seems to me an enigma. The messiah son of Mary, or the messiah Isa son of Mary, who did not die on the cross but was translated to heaven, plays, in the Qur'ân, the role of a simple prophet; the word *messiah* figures therein as a purely honorary title; but of the *messianic* role of Jesus there is nothing mentioned. How could the Muslims, on the other hand, have lent to the Christians, after the death of Mohammed, the data they have attributed to their Prophet? And if these data came indeed from him, why are they not in the Qur'ân? There is only one possible answer: it is that they were in the original Qur'ân and that they were arbitrarily eliminated thence by subsequent recensions. Why? Probably because they presented under a too precise form (we saw this for the mysterious *malhamat*) the apocalyptic nature of their Prophet. It is for the same reason that the tradition lends to Muhammad on this point words much more explicit than those of the Qur'ân. One has left in the revealed book only those which are re-clad in a form more or less vague or even ambiguous; still one must take care to sow it discreetly in the vast field of the suras, to weaken its scope.

Thus Mohammed said, in the tradition: "The hour and I are so connected that the hour almost arrived before me[195]." The Qur'ân says: "It is closer to you and (still) closer – then it is closer to

[193] See for example the *Livre de la Création et de l'histoire*, translated by Mr. Clément Huart, t. II, 145-204 (*Publications de l'École des langues orientales vivantes*, 4th series, vol. XVII). [*al-Bad' wa-al-tārīkh*, sometimes attributed to Balkhi and sometimes to Maqdisi. This work is not taken seriously in our times, and Casanova seems not to have bothered much with it back then.]

[194] See VAN VLOTEN, *Recherches sur la domination arabe*, p. 58. One verse (the one I have made the first epigraph) refers, according to some commentators, to Jesus as "sign of the hour." But this interpretation is arbitrary and, in my view, untenable.

[195] See above, page 15. [tr. 17]

you and (still) closer[196].” But one has found a way to restore the comparative *closer* to another form which means: misfortune! So, according to the commentators, it must mean: “woe to you!” and God who generally addresses himself to Mohammed addresses himself here to any other; the commentators’ fantasy can give him opportunity. Furthermore, God said, “Yes, the hour comes; soon it will be that I make it appear[197].” By mischance, the Arabic verb at the end can mean just the opposite, and can be translated “soon it will be that I hide it!” What substance can be made of this double-meaning passage? Moreover, it is said, “the *matter* of the hour is but the flash or it is (still) closer[198].” But the word I translate as “matter” is more vague. It means more generally “decree” and one will say, with the commentators that when the *decree* of God has been announced, the hour will appear; he will only say: “be” and it will be. The term “closer” which, this time, is not in doubt, lends itself there but little, and I suspect strongly that the word *matter* has here positively the sense of “existence, arrival”. But how to affirm it?

I could give some examples of this ambiguity of the Qur’ân where the tradition is clear and precise; but I think I have said enough to show the possibility of a skillful editing on all points. I do not accept imposture in Mohammed, and cannot believe that he has, himself, used vague expressions to be sure of not being contradicted by events, because if it were so, it would not compromise him in the familiar words that have been reported to us of him. But nothing seems more plausible to me than imposture among the Prophet’s heirs, the official leaders of Islam.

Is this to say that the Prophet’s mind had not varied and that his confidence in the speedy coming of the hour and in the glorious role which was there reserved for him was always expressed with the same energy and the same assurance? No. We have already seen that he went

[196] 75:34.

[197] 20:15[a]. This verse is artificially scattered in the midst of others. The rhyme is completely different. [And, indeed, the Egyptian Qur’ân attaches this Flügelvers to v. 15b, thus making a whole verse.]

[198] 16:77. [“the flash of the eye”]

through a period of anguish and of quasi despair. In this respect one can determine in the Qur'ân three distinct phases, albeit mixed and confounded at will in the official recension.

In the first phase, he asserts the imminence of the hour[199]; in the second, he hesitates and declares he does not know if it is near or far. Later, absorbed by his new duties as general-in-chief and of legislator, he leaves the matter and occupies himself only with the needs of the present hour.

The first revelation is, in my view, in the beginning of the chapter entitled: the announcement[200]. It is like the famous *eureka* of Archimedes, the cry of elation that follows the long meditations upon a distressing problem. "Upon what do they ask themselves? – upon the great news. – on the topic of which they dispute. – Yes, they will know! – Then, yes, they will know!" This great news, Mohammed knows and he is going to proclaim it. This is where, as we have seen above[201], he takes its name annunciator, *nabi* or prophet.

Then comes the threat of the fire, which initially seems reserved for the rich: "For personal gain is your preoccupation – until you have paid visit to the graves[202]. – Yes, you will know! – Then, yes, you will know! – Yes, if you had the knowledge of the certain! – You will see the *djahim*, – then, you will see it by the sight of the certain, – then, that day, you will be questioned about the bounty![203]." Who does not see the close relationship of these verses with the previous: they are of the same stream, bitter and violent. The great news, this is the science of the *certain*; we find the same word that God will use later to calm the disquiet of the announcer: "Pray and

[199] This is acknowledged by Mr. Houtsma (CHANTEPIE, French trans., 263, l. 6).
[200] 78:1-5. After these verses, the sura changes in rhyme and also in tone. It is visible that they have been artificially annexed there.
[201] Page 39, note 2. [tr. 38 n.93]
[202] Enigmatic expression that is generally explained by "up to when you die."
[203] 102 in full.

wait, until happens to you the certain[204]!" It is still for the rich he wants this in sura 104; after the *djahim*[205], now is the *hotama* which he announces to them, and he defines it: "God's fire burnt atop the hearts". In sura 111, he goes even so far to appoint personally one of these evil rich whose name: Abu Lahab points to a dismal rapprochement with the flame: Lahab.

It is a curious point that this first curse, so Christian, counters the rich; it would not be at all surprising if there was here a direct influence from the monks. To come, amidst the powerful of the earth, to announce to them the horrible fate that awaits them, to proclaim to them openly this *mané*, *técel*, *pharès*, this is the first impulse of the neophyte inspired by implacable ascetics! Note, in passing, how little this is reconcilable with the tradition that made of Mohammed a rich and respected man[206]. Anyway the Qur'ân says it positively: Mohammed is despised by the rich, and it is always thus; always there are in a land the rich who despise the prophets[207]. But I shall not dwell on this inquiry; I just report it, because if I am not mistaken, it has never been conceived.

Only after these diatribes of the first hour does Muhammad divide mankind: firstly between good and evil, then between believers and unbelievers. The suras 99 and 101 which have a close relationship belong to the first group: "The earth shakes, etc.; men will see their deeds; whoever has done good worth an atom's weight shall see it." – "When shall come the *coup*, etc., those whose scales are heavy (with good works) shall have a pleasant life, those whose scales are light, will inhabit a burning fire." With the suras 103 and 83 appears the new design: "Man is lost, except those who believe, etc.". – "Woe to the negators; they will be in the fire; the believers will laugh at the infidels, etc." But already two other tropes have appeared: man opposed to God and

[204] See above, page 37. [tr. 37]
[205] The word, common in the Koran, is considered to mean the fire of hell.
[206] We have seen (p. 43-44 tr. 43) that the enrichment mentioned the Koran can only be mystic.
[207] The infidels exclaim: "If only this Qur'ân had been revealed to some notable of the two cities!" 43:31; cf. 33:40. The theme is developed especially in 34:34-7; 43:23; 17:16; cf. further 56:45, 23:64.

his ingratitude to God's blessings. It is this ingratitude which, in the language of the Qur'ân, becomes infidelity. A whole group of very important suras states this aphorism which, as we see, has a theological character. By a remarkable process that belongs only to powerful intelligences, the doctrine widens and acquires a sovereign scale; it is suddenly by wings that the Prophet's mind arose little by little and hovers in the sphere of high speculations of the mind. "Invoke[208] the name of thy Lord who created - who has created man from a blood clot. - Invoke; thy Lord is the most generous. - He who taught by the pen. - Who has taught to man what he knew not. - Yes, man is unjust, etc.[209]". The Muslim exegetes are willing to declare that the first five verses are those which were revealed to Muhammad first[210]. But this comes only, in my view, of the sura's first word: *iqra* on a root whence also derives the word Qur'ân. The verses that follow, at least until the eighth, cannot be detached therefrom, the thesis being: benefactor God, ungrateful man. Sura 76, precisely entitled "mankind" develops this theme[211] and at the same time gives the detailed ledger of the joys of paradise and the torments of hell. The idea of the fundamental compact between man and God comes quickly to its fullness. Thank God, it is said in essence, love God, adore him, and on the supreme day, ye escape the torment; much more, you will be magnificently rewarded. It is to this surah which is attached, wrongly or rightly (I cannot decide), the probably-first mention of the word Qur'ân (verse 23).

[208] I take the side of Hirschfeld's opinion (*Beiträge zur Erklärung des Koran*, p. 6), on the true translation [Verkünde! – "proclaim"], not only by comparison with the Hebrew texts he cites, but with the Arabic where the same verb does not always mean "reading" as the commentators want to translate it here.

[209] 96:1-6.

[210] Cf. NÖLDEKE, *Geschichte des Qorans*, p. 62 (2nd edition, p. 78 [Behn tr. 66]). Despite the unanimous agreement of Arab traditions listed by this scholar who sees, in this agreement, a proof of veracity, I consider as completely artificial the separation of the first five verses from the following three.

[211] It is found very often and in many forms; but it is especially emphasized in the last suras of the official recension which are unanimously recognized as the earliest revealed. I cite in particular: XLI, 49 ff .; LXXX, 16, 24; LXXXII, 6; LXXXIV, 6; LXXXVI, 5; LXXXIX, 14, 24; cf. LV, where the blessings of God are recalled in chorus.

Not only is man ungrateful; he is presumptuous[212] and does not see his weakness and his misery. Mercilessly taunting this ridiculous pride, the Prophet exalts God and acquires the most eloquent tones. If God has created man, can he not create him anew? If he has made life once, can he not revive it? What have they to laugh of Mohammed's preaching? Laughs best who laughs last!

This is the attitude that initially the Prophet takes in regard to his skeptical countrymen: he nuances, in his turn, this threat of contemptuous irony. Had he not, moreover, to support his claim and to strengthen his mission, the peoples of Scripture, these Jews and Christians who may differ over the dating, on some circumstantial details, but know that the Hour must inevitably arrive?

There is no doubt that there are in the Qur'ân - dispersed and, by that, weakened, but formal, nonetheless - sayings affirming that the people of Scripture recognize as their own the new doctrine. The period must be carefully distinguished where the Arab prophet speaks confidently of their assent, from that where, better enlightened, he seeks to bring them by persuasion ending with the curse and the anathema upon their hardened hearts. This distinction is not sufficiently indicated, I believe, among the authors who have studied the Qur'ân; therefore I will quote the related passages throughout[213].

"'Tis also that we have sent down upon thee the *book* (*ie* the Qur'ân), and those to whom we have given the *book* (*ie* the Scripture) and believe in it, among them (Mohammed's compatriots) there are some who believe in it and none deny our signs but the Infidels[214]". We see that the Prophet employs the same term to refer to the Qur'ân and the Bible; perhaps when he speaks of

[212] See Q. 75, in full: 36:78 ff, etc.

[213] As always, I make it a rule to literally transcribe without taking into account the more or less arbitrary commentaries; if there is obscurity, I leave it alone, never interpreting, except by indispensible parentheses.

[214] 29:47.

the people of the *book* (or the Scripture), he thinks precisely the Greek *biblos* which in European languages, is synonymous with the Scripture (Old and New Testament). One knows elsewhere that, for him, the Qur'ân is but a sequel to the Scripture. Anyway, the verse just quoted clearly opposes two groups: people of Scripture and Arabs who believe the Qur'ân on one hand, and unbelieving Arabs, on the other. In the same Sura, the second of the verses that follow the one I have just translated presents a similar idea. "But this (the Qur'ân), these are self-evident signs in the hearts[215] of those who have received the *knowledge* (ie the Revelation) and none deny our signs but the evildoers." The word *knowledge* in the Qur'ân's tongue is synonym of *book*, and I conclude here that the expression "those who have received the knowledge" here refers positively the people of Scripture.

"Those to whom We gave the *book* before it, they believe in it (ie the Qur'ân); - And when one recites it before them they say: we believe in it, it is the truth (coming) from our Lord; before it, we were Muslims[216] . Those who received the knowledge know that which has descended unto you (coming) from your Lord, is the truth and that it leads to the way of the Powerful and Glorious[217]. Say: Believe in it or do not believe; those who received the knowledge before it, when it is recited (Qur'ân) before them, fall on their faces, prostrate, [-] and say: Glory to our Lord! the promise of our Lord is accomplished. - They fall on their faces, prostrate; they cry and He increases them in humility[218]. Those to whom we gave the Scripture rejoice in that which came down unto you; and among the (Arab) parties, there are some who deny in it a part... [219] ... those to whom we gave the Scripture know that it (the Qur'ân) has descended from God by the

[215] Literally: "the breasts", cf. above, page 42 [tr. 41].
[216] 28:52-3.
[217] 34:6.
[218] 17:107-9.
[219] 13:36.

truth; so be not of those who doubt[220]! Those who received Scripture know that it (the Qur'ân) is the truth (coming) from their Lord, and to God does not escape what they do[221]. Those to whom We gave the Scripture recite it (the Qur'ân) according to the truth of his recitation; they believe in it and those who are unbelievers, they are the lost[222]. Those who follow the popular Prophet whom they find mentioned (litt. "writ") with them in the Torah and Gospel ... and follow the light which is sent down with him, these are the fortunate[223]. We have set as guardians of the fires (of hell) some of the angels, and we have set their number[224] as a trial for the infidels, so that those who have received the Scripture have certainty and that those who believe should be increased in faith; - And in doubt are neither those who received Scripture nor the Believers[225]." This last verse [v. 32 in Flügel's text] makes such redundance that I suspect it to have been intercalated there for it to remove its primitive character of affirmation. The subjunctive and the present are distinguished in Arabic only by a brief vowel, the alteration be very easy. If we move immediately to the Flügelvers 33, "And for those in the hearts of whom is an infirmity and the infidels say, etc." one sees how the Flügelvers 32 is easy to remove. Here the conjunction "for those" is repeated and the symmetry interrupted by the Flügelvers 32 resumes its value. Attach to this that the rhyme of the Flügelvers 32 is foreign to that of the group where it belongs, and we will be allowed to restore to it its true face, setting the verb to the present. My translation permitting the one and the other interpretation, the verse detaches itself easily.

[220] 6:114.

[221] Q. 2, end of verse 144, which refers nothing to the context and must be inserted artificially; however, the final reflection suggests the epoch when Mohammed begins to doubt the adherence of Jews and Christians to his doctrines.

[222] 2:121.

[223] 7:157. I translate the word Oummi by "popular" as deriving from oummat "people." As has already been suggested by GEIGER, *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen* (2nd ed.) [#1.2], p. 27, note [FM Young tr. *Judaism and Islam* (Bangalore: 1896), 20 and n. 4], SPRENGER, *Leben*, II, 401, NÖLDEKE, *Geschichte*, 10 (2nd ed., 14 [Behn tr. 11]), it may be that the word, opposed very neatly to "those of Scripture" also corresponds to the word "gentile" in the biblical sense.

[224] This refers to the number of nineteen just stated in the previous verse 74:30.

[225] 74:31. [Three verses in Casanova's text, that of Flügel. Following that, I tag each third a "Flügelvers" here.]

"It is (the Qur'ân) in the texts of the ancients. - Is not for them (the Arabs) a sign, (that makes) that the scholars of the Israelites know it?[226] God raises (or will raise[227]) for those of you Meccans) who believe and those who received the knowledge, (many) degrees, and God is aware of what you do[228]."

One will note that I have presented pell-mell these various passages: I could have collected here a list of the others to reinforce here the significance and to put into evidence their agreements. But their scattering in the Qur'ân is so wide that one might hesitate over the real connexion of some of these to the first era (Mohammed's assurance on the adhesion of the Jews and Christians). So I did not want to expose myself to setting them an arbitrarily determined place in my presentation. The ensemble above still supports, I think, the affirmation that Mohammed, to shake the unbelievers, to show them, as belonging to the same family favored by God, the first Muslims and the people of the Scripture[229]. It is the formal approval of the latter which he invokes, and that is, indeed, an argument that must have been critical. I believe, personally, that this consent at the beginning, was real; this great movement aroused the Arab Prophet to the belief in the time predicted by the sacred texts should not offend the Jews and Christians who could legitimately expect to divert it to their profit. The tricky part was the role attributed to Mohammed, and that is probably what would force, later, the rupture.

The Jews mainly seem to have been the most eager to greet with sympathy the new doctrine in its first effusions. We have come to see that the Qur'ân makes a positive allusion to a

[226] 26:196-7.

[227] See page 29, note 1. [tr. 29 n. 54]

[228] 58:11. The end is reminiscent of the verse quoted above (2:144) where it is perhaps best read as: "what you do" instead of "what they do". In the Arabic language and writing this confusion of the two times is easy; all it takes is to displace two dots.

[229] See the famous verse (2:62) which all Muslims consider as abrogated and which is, indeed, in formal contradiction with that choler which the attitude of the people of Scripture raised later in the Prophet's heart: "Jews, Christians and Muslims, if they do good, will be saved." Just read any translation to see that this verse has been arbitrarily inserted in Sura II (one of the later). Same remark applies to 5:69, which is identical.

recognition of this doctrine by the Rabbis. Another passage says in a form slightly more padded: "Say: have you seen (the consequences) if it (the Qur'ân) is from God, and that you have been unfaithful to him, and that a witness among the Jews has testified on that which is similar and he has believed it, then that you have disdained them? God does not lead the people unjust[230]".

Thus Mohammed affirms that a Jew has given testimony and has believed. Some commentators think that this alluded to the Jew Abdullah ibn Salam who, indeed, became Muslim; but others observe that the Surat having been revealed in Mecca, so before the Hegira, predates this conversion, and these propose to see there Moses! By "what is similar to it" should mean, according to them, the Torah (Pentateuch). I believe indeed that this expression of the Qur'ân which I have translated literally means "testified to its resemblance to the Jewish Bible"; but as to which character is alluded to, we have to resign ourselves to ignore it. It matters little here; which is to remember is the argument vis-à-vis the skeptics. "What! a Jew, one of those privileged to whom God has given a *knowledge*, a revelation, gives me confidence, acknowledges the accuracy of my doctrine; and you, poor ignorant Arabs, you dare to ignore!"

Such is, at that time, the psychology of the Prophet. The rest is well known; Mohammed's anger was all the more violent that his original assurance had been more sincere; this anger spans so many verses it would be superfluous to mention them. However, I recall that the new state of mind of the Prophet is synthesized somehow in the sura of the Evidence: "Those who were infidels among the people of the Scripture and the polytheists have made schism only when arrived to them the *evidence* - a prophet (from) God reciting pure pages [-] where are the true scriptures - those who received the Scripture separated themselves only after came to them the

[230] 46:10.

evidence, etc.[231].” We have seen how the commentators have interpreted these verses according to their real meaning, and how one of them let out a valuable admission[232]. The people of Scripture believed *in the prophet of the end of the world*; this was self-evidently Mohammed; they have closed their eyes to the evidence. So great is their crime, their punishment will be so ruthless! It is over this sensitive issue that ensued the break.

It must have been a grave problem for Mohammed that it was necessary to retract it wherever it was found. Was the lynchpin of which he was so proud going to fail him? The subtle mind of his race inspired him this stroke of genius: since the people of Scripture had definitively refused their assent, he would pass them over. It was best: a revelation that they could not control and which secret God would communicate to him alone, the same as that for which Abraham had been the recipient. The followers of Moses and Jesus could now deny him; it was for him Abraham who was neither a Jew, nor a Christian, but *Muslim*.[233] He said again recklessly that the people of the Scripture recognized themselves *Muslims*[234]; but now he had no fear of denial, as this evaded their competence: “O people of the scripture why do you talk about Abraham, while the Torah and the Gospel were not revealed until after him? Do you not understand? That is: you people talk about what you have a knowledge (ie revelation); why talk about what you have no *knowledge*? God knows, and you do not know! Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but

[231] 98:1-4. The mention of the polytheists in the first verse cannot be explained, at least that it cannot mean the Christians generally included with the Jews under the term of “people of the Scripture”. The fourth verse just repeats the first and is most likely only a variant: I am inclined to believe that it represents the most correct version.

[232] See above, pages 52-53. [tr. 52]

[233] 3:67. It is also said that he is hanif. This word, on which so much has been discussed, seems simply another form of the word Muslim. This is what Mr. Houtsma (Chantepie, *trad. franç*, p. 258) has clearly seen. In what he says I will add a remark. Even as “Muslim” means “who devotes himself (ie to God)” hanif means “who inclines (to God).” One finds at one point the complete form, XXII, 32.

[234] 28:53. See above, page 75. [tr. 75]

he was *hanif*, *Muslim* and was not a polytheist. - The closest men to Abraham are those who followed him and this Prophet and those who believe. God is the friend of believers[235].”

This was indeed a stroke of genius because at the same time, the Prophet turned back to his countrymen and extolled their racial pride in reminding them that they were the descendants of Abraham and in placing them, this time, decidedly above the people of the Scripture. It was the Arabs who shall now be the favored people, and Islamism was made synonymous with Arabism. Mohammed’s thought reaches here the summit from which it was nevermore to descend and from which top he threatens and taunts turn by turn the unbelievers. It is on the refuge from all controversy and it is sure of the morrow; already it may provide the rush of Arabs towards their revealed religion: “When comes the succor from God and the victory – and that you see people entering the religion of God by legions - celebrate the praises of thy Lord; implore his pardon; he is generous[236].”

Here ends the first period; I will not repeat the various verses where reference is made to the proximity of the hour. I want to cite only one that I have reserved as meriting a discussion: “Are they awaiting that the Hour, (that is to say) which arrives to them unexpectedly; already the signs have come among us. And when it comes to them, where will remind them?[237]”. Two things are therefore distinguished: 1. That which is generally interpreted by the warning signs; 2. the hour itself. Beidawi told us that among these indications are the mission of Mohammed[238] and the miracle of the split moon. This miracle, as we know, is an interpretation in fact whimsical of the

[235] 3:65-8.

[236] Q. 110, in full. The official recension gives it as from Medina (ie after the Hegira) or from Mecca (ie before the Hegira). The hesitation comes doubtless from that the victory of which the sura speaks seems to allude to the final triumph of Mohammed by the taking of Mecca; but I see a reference to the Hour (cf. 61:13: “a succor (coming) from God and a near victory; announce the good news to the Believers”). I believe that this sura belongs to the first period. On this mystical victory, see above, page 38, note 3 [tr. 38 n. 90]

[237] 47:18.

[238] See above, page 56 [tr. 56], citation Mr. Snouck Hurgronje.

verse 54:1, "the hour is nigh and the moon is split", interpretion that the Qur'ân's language authorizes, it is true, by the abuse it has made of the past to better affirm the future[239]. As for the other signs, they are missing in the Qur'ân; but the tradition is better informed, as we know already. The Muslims have ended by taking their side of the ever growing gap between the two first signs of the ever expected events; but it is clear that Muhammad meant here that the Hour itself would strike his contemporaries, and he knew that everything was ready. For him, the preparatory period was completed; there was nothing left but, to use an image familiar to us, to raise the curtain.

We have seen, at the beginning of this study, how Sprenger, while discovering to a fault a proof of trickery, has put in evidence the character of personal and immediate threat that includes more than one passage to the address of those who laughed in the face of the unfortunate predictor of an hour that did not decide to come. As time passed, the situation became difficult. Encouraged by impunity, the scoffers put him against the wall, demanded him to fix a date. After the defection of the people of the Scripture, this perpetual denial inflicted by the facts had to be the hardest test for Mohammed and for all his neophytes who were to be shaken first and of which the anxiety had to be communicated to him.

Then a new theory arises: Only God knows the time of the hour, it will come to be sure, but Mohammed cannot say more[240]; he renounced this of himself and passed credit to his Lord. We have seen that this renunciation was not easy for him; it is probable that he would have been

[239] This hyperbolic formula, exceptionally common in all languages, is employed at every turn by Mohammed, and often perplexes those trying to understand the text, as philologist and not as exegete.

[240] VII, 184, 187; XXVII, 73, 74; XLII, 16; XLVII, 25, 26; LXXII, 26; LXXIX, 42, 46. This evolution of Mohammeds' thought has already been indicated by Sprenger, *Leben*, II, 497 ff.; by Mr WELLHAUSEN, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 2nd ed., p. 240. It is remarkable how the Arab prophet here uses the same language as that of Jesus (see above, page 22). Cf. MAURICE VERNES, *Histoire des idées messianique*, page 224, note 1; pp. 239-240; Jesus' psychology there appears very similar to that of Mohammed, such as I explain here. It results from the same concepts.

shadowed in the final despair if events had not finally brought such a relief to the Prophet that he was allowed to see there, in all sincerity, the living tangible and proof that God was with him. The Hegira, the early successes, the final triumph advanced everything. Now one could attend confidently; a day sooner or later, what matter! There was no more mockery to occupy them, and the sword of the conqueror was ready to close the mouth of the last recalcitrants.

We have seen Mohammed's flexibility of spirit before the difficulties which sprang under his feet. This same flexibility did not evade his successors. It is very likely that, contrary to the narrative of Arab historians, the Muslims cherished hope for Mohammed's return and that this is what to the length of the weary minds that decided to replace Ali first by Muhammad son of Ali then in who incarnated the first concept of the mahdi[241]. We have outlined the history of this concept which is Islam's supreme effort to maintain across the centuries the continuity of the thought, mistress of the Qur'ân: "The times are over, the prophet of the Hour is risen!" Today there is not one Muslim who does not say softly, he is going to arise, inequality is going to disappear, the last judgment is going to be pronounced! See the eternal dream which haunts all hearts day and night.

To define this mindset which is the essence of Islam, to translate the inner speech of that miserable Arab who, squatting in his ragged burnoose, seems absorbed by an empty daydream and without thought, it suffices to modify a little the enthusiastic verses of Alfred de Musset:

A great hope has crossed the land .....

Who of us, who of us is going to be <u>mahdi</u>?

[241] Perhaps he had already incarnated in Ali; see page 65, note 3. [tr. 64 n. 180]